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K. Joseph II. Emperor of Germany

JOSEPH

AND

BENJAMIN,

A

CONVERSATION.

TRANSLATED FROM A FRENCH MANUSCRIPT.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE humble ſituation of the tranſlator of a printed book, or of a manuſcript, ſcarcely entitles him to addreſs his readers; and never may it be done with any propriety, except when it cannot be avoided.

It is neceſſary, however, to ſay that the chief aim has been to

to tranſlate with accuracy, and that the deficiencies in point of elegance, claim on that account ſome excuſe.

The tranſlator is ſorry that he cannot indulge the public with an account of the manner in which the Converſation and Letter has come to his hands. The notes were all in the French manuſcript, except one, which the tranſlator added, refering to the Cuſtom Houſe books of London, to ſhew that Dr. Franklin was not miſtaken in his aſſertion.

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PRE-

PREFACE

By M * * * * *.

IT will no doubt become a matter of enquiry, by what means a converſation privately held, and intended to be kept private by two men of ſtrict honour, has in leſs than two years found its way to the public in print; a complete anſwer to this queſtion would certainly be very agreable to many, but a complete anſwer cannot at this time be given:

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when the heads of ſome perſons concerned ſhall be laid low, the ſurviving world may with propriety receive a full account of the tranſaction, but not till then. All that at preſent can be ſaid on this ſubject, is, that ACCIDENT, but no diſhonourable, no unfair means has brought the important converſation before the eyes of the public. This ought to be ſufficient to ſatisfy every enquiry, and it certainly will ſatisfy all, except thoſe who are eager to *ſearch* into ſecrets, not on account of their importance, but merely becauſe they are ſecrets; on this occaſion, ſuch enquirers will loſe their labour, for except to a few gentlemen the facts

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are unknown, and theſe few are deeply concerned in concealing it from the reſt of the world. The interview between the Emperor of Germany, and his American Excellency was kept a ſecret; and that, as well as what paſſed at the inteview was unknown, even to the numerous ſpies about Paris and Verſailles, and except for the accident which diſcovered all, it might perhaps not have been known for ſome years that theſe two remarkable men ever ſaw each other.

The politics of Britain and of France, at preſent regulate the European nations, and therefore, it

is not to be wondered at, that the Emperor directed the converſation particularly to that ſubject: but the leſs ſo, when we alſo recollect, that from Doctor Franklin, the Emperor could not expect information reſpecting the affairs of any other European powers; but as he had reſided at, and had many tranſactions with theſe courts, the Emperor could probably not have found any man ſo fit to let him enter into their views.

The court of England, which ſeldom has any ſchemes upon its neighbours, has nothing to fear from its views being made known; but it is not ſo with France, which always has

has had, and always will have deſigns upon the liberty or the importance of other nations. The particular plans which France has laid to aggrandiſe herſelf at the expence of other nations, have been changed, ſometimes with the whims and fancies of Kings, of miniſters, and of their miſtreſſes; but that *one principle* of raiſing herſelf at the expence of others, has been adhered to as invariably by the French court, as nature adheres to the laws of attraction and gravitation. It is happy for the undeſigning part of mankind when they are made acquainted with the plans and deſigns of thoſe who lay in wait to enſnare them about, as the lion watches

for his prey; and it is fortunate for European nations, when the ſchemes of France are diſcovered, ſo as to enable thoſe whom it concerns, the more eaſily to counteract them.—In the preſent caſe, England and the Dutch ſeem to have the moſt occaſion to be upon their guard, but it is the nature both of the Engliſh and the Dutch, not to move till danger is actually at the door. The forms of government ſeem to be the cauſe of this, for it is not poſſible in either country to make any great exertion, unleſs the *people* are alarmed; and as diſtant danger never will rouſe the multitude, it conſequently never will excite

cite either of theſe nations to make a great exertion.

Although the views of France might alarm, and ought to alarm England, yet they will have rather a contrary effect. The Engliſh miniſtry as they have not power to oppoſe, ſo they will not avow that they ſee any danger, their buſineſs is to make the internal affairs of the kingdom go on as ſmoothly and pleaſantly as may be, till ſome external ſhock which they cannot prevent, puts an end to, or deranges their tranquility. Of this, paſt times afford many examples; and there is no reaſon for thinking that the time to come will not

not be productive of ſuch as are ſimilar. In France it is otherwiſe, there the people are of leſs importance, and the king dares to take the meaſures that ſeem moſt for his own intereſt and for that of the kingdom. Were it made known in France, that Britain had views on their poſſeſſions, meaſures would inſtantly be taken to counteract their plans; perhaps in England the like intelligence might produce a remonſtrance by the Ambaſſador, which would certainly obtain nothing but an evaſive anſwer from the French court, and there the matter would reſt.

Thus

Thus relatively conſtituted with regard to their future intereſts, are France, England and Holland; the former tremblingly alive to every circumſtance; the two latter not only calous, but as it were deafened intentionally, that they may not receive any information that may tend to interrupt the tranquility of peace. The following converſation may poſſibly diſconcert the court of France a little, but as for England and Holland they are neither to be alarmed from the mouths of great men, nor the preſs of the printer. Yet ſtill it is not unworthy of remark, and it may add ſome weight, even to the teſtimony of Doctor Franklin, that

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ſo far as time has yet allowed the plans of France to be followed, they are going on exactly as he foretold.—they are ſtrengthning themſelves in India, and entering into a commercial connection with Britain, who on her part, is looking ſo directly, and ſo intenſely at the intereſts of the preſent day, that thoſe of future times are neither ſeen nor regarded.

Such always is the fate of men, who have drank deep of the pleaſing cup of proſperity, and until they have become drunk; and at ſuch times it is that the delightful draught is daſhed from their lips, and the cup broken in pieces like a Potter's veſſel.

veſſel.* But it is a vain endeavour to attempt to ſtop the carreer of nature, or to alter its courſe. Proſperity can never be arreſted or chained to one ſpot; but delights to range from nation to nation, and withdraw her ſmiles, from the enervated luxury of a rich Court, to the habitation of the painted Savage. To this owes Britain her greatneſs, and to this will ſhe owe her fall. Perſia, Egypt, Italy, and other countries, entertained the fickle miſtreſs, and each in its day concluded the attachment would be *eternal*, and looked with contempt on that portion of the

* The Doctor's expreſſion.

world

world which ſhe had not yet viſited; but let Perſia, Egypt, and Italy, be an eternal mark for remembrance, that even the fineſt portion of the world, that even the hand of nature which has bleſſed them with the moſt enviable ſoil and climate, cannot ſecure the ſmiles of fortune, or arreſt proſperity. Could the virtue, the induſtry of body, and the vigour of mind, that at firſt have charms to attract proſperity, be arreſted, they might rivett and preſerve her affections; but indolence, ſelfiſhneſs, and indifference to the public good, expell her from the ſociety; and it is againſt thoſe things the proſperous nations ſhould chiefly guard. It is however,

however, to thoſe things that they chiefly give encouragement in England, as indeed always has been done in every ſtate, where proſperity has deſtroyed virtue. It ſeems not to be the nature of man to do otherwiſe. *

Whatever

* This may ſeem rather too ſtrong, but it is a fact. Who does not join in a ſneer at the poor and diſintereſted man? and who does not join in courting the affluent, by whatever means he has acquired his riches? It is true there are no public praiſes voted to a man, merely becauſe he is rich, but except that, every other mark of diſtinction awaits the man who has made a fortune.

This is the more deſerving to be remarked, that the ſame thing took place at Rome in her proſperity, and preceded the fall of all her greatneſs.

Whatever uſe the wiſdom of mankind may lead them to make of the converſation of theſe two great men, they at leaſt can conſider the communication, as of no dangerous tendency to ſociety: the political part may be thrown aſide, and what regards philoſophy, will be found to accord ſtrictly with virtue. The moſt exceptionable part may perhaps, be what regards the preference that has been given by the *Learned*, to the ſtudy of language, over that of ſcience; this will, no doubt excite ſome criticiſm, but it would be arrogating too much, to make an apology for the Doctor's arguments; and it would be unpardonable to ſuppreſs

preſs any part of the important and intereſting converſation of that day; which is therefore accurately laid before the public in the following pages.

JOSEPH

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JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN,

&c. &c.

ONE morning during the reſidence of that great American Negociator, Benjamin Franklin, at Paris, he received a letter written by the Imperial Joſeph, who was then alſo in that capitol under an aſſumed name.

The letter, expreſſive of that high eſteem which great abilities gain even from the rulers of nations, intimated the intention of the royal ſtranger, who had long wiſhed to

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have a perſonal acquaintance with his American Excellency; and who intended to wait upon him next day, not as an Emperor, but as a private perſon, deſirous of acquiring knowledge by the converſation of a man who had diſtinguiſhed himſelf as a philoſopher and a politician, and by ſharing in the dangers of a conteſt which had ended in giving liberty to his country.

The old philoſopher who had long been accuſtomed to the company of the great, and who had in every ſenſe of the word (except that he was not rich) become one of that order himſelf, embraced with more than ordinary pleaſure the opportunity of converſing with a man whoſe abilities and unremitting attention to the

the promotion of human happineſs, had long attracted his eſteem. The urbanity which the political hero of the Weſtern World had acquired, during a long life, added to that great ſenſe of propriety, for which he is eminently diſtinguiſhed, determined him to return an anſwer in perſon. He waited upon the illuſtrious ſtranger at his hotel immediately. It was ſoon agreed that they ſhould enjoy each others company for one day at a ſmall retired ſpot a few miles diſtant from Paris, where the old philoſopher uſed to reſt himſelf from the fatigues that accompany a political life.

The following Saturday was the day appointed, and ſcarcely had the venerable old man arrived from Paris

when his Imperial Viſitor alighted from a poſt-chariot at the gate. When two ſuch remarkable men are together, the occurrences that in ordinary life would not deſerve notice become of importance, and deſerve a relation. The chariot was ſent back to town, with orders not to return till eight o'clock in the evening, and a ſingle attendant on horſeback, who was not a ſervant, but a private ſecretary and a gentleman, remained.

The Imperial Joſeph was no ſooner alighted, than he was received at the gate by his hoſt, from whoſe ſtrong-marked face the lines of age had not baniſhed the ſmiles and complacency of youth. Joſeph, forgetting the *ideal* diſtinctions of rank, threw his arms round the old man, and embraced him

him with a cordiality and ſincerity that is ſeldom manifeſted or felt by princes.

The Imperial Viſitor talked much, and with great ſenſe and judgment, on the pleaſures of a private and retired life, while they were at breakfaſt; and it was propoſed to walk out into a ſmall garden nearly adjoining to the houſe, where walking and ſitting alternately they might converſe more agreeably.

This retreat, though not elegant, was ſequeſtered and agreeable; and nature, as if willing to leave nothing wanting, bleſſed this extraordinary conference with one of the moſt delightful days that are to be ſeen in the ſummer months—the air

was not ſultry but agreeable, and the heat of the ſun was prevented from annoying the intereſting converſation, by thoſe light broken clouds which appearing in mercy to the human race, ſkreen them from the ſcorching rays of the mid-day heat. In ſuch a place, more deſirable for its rural beauty than for its magnificence, in one of the moſt agreeable ſeaſons of the year, accompanied with the moſt unbounded confidence, founded on mutual eſteem: in ſuch a place, time, and circumſtances, did theſe two illuſtrious characters meet, to exchange ſentiments with a freedom and confidence, which even the American philoſopher, during a long life, had *ſeldom* experienced, and which was almoſt *entirely new* to his royal gueſt, who thus began—

Jos.

JOSEPH. From this interview, for which I have long wiſhed, I expect much inſtruction; for, born to dominion as I was, converſation, that great inlet to wiſdom, has been ſhut againſt me. The former adverſities of my family, it is true, have diſpoſed me to think ſeriouſly: and though an Emperor, I can feel for the meaneſt of my ſubjects. I have ſpent my life in endeavouring, by being familiar with men, to know them well, that I may be a bleſſing to thoſe whom I govern, but in vain; for I have never been able to deſtroy that diſtance which nature has placed between us: but in your converſation I hope to meet with what I have hitherto ſought for in vain.

BENJAMIN. You honour me greatly by that compliment; and in return I ſhall ſpeak what I think. In my opinion, Sir, your loſs is not ſo great as you imagine. By knowing mankind well, we are ſometimes led to deſpiſe, and ſometimes to hate them. It is an evil that ſeems to be entailed on human nature, that the better we are acquainted with the world, the leſs we care for it. You, Sir, have the happineſs to know the fair ſide of mankind, and that only—it is the ſide that is moſt eaſily known; for it is the buſineſs of every individual in the world to hold it up to view. The other is concealed by all, and is only to be known by an interference with their intereſts. I have always marked the difference that there is in the character of the man who has always

always been great, and of one who had once been in a lower ſtation. Julius Cæſar, I think, was the only great man who always acted as if he had poſſeſſed greatneſs by inheritance; he had neither the ſuſpicion nor the caution which betray an acquaintance with the *iron* ſide of mankind. Of the other heroes who enſlaved their country, I do not recollect one who roſe to greatneſs, without thoſe traits of character.

JOSEPH. Well, Sir; but do not you think, that the more we know, the better it is for thoſe we govern?—ſurely, the more we know of the nature of men, the better we ſhould be able to govern them, although I am ready to admit, that it may not be the better for our own feelings.

BENJAMIN. There certainly are advantages attendant upon a thorough knowledge of mankind; and that it does in ſome degree *enable* a Ruler to govern better, I am alſo ready to confeſs. I never knew a lady treat her robin-red-breaſt better for knowing that it would pick out the eyes of its fellow. When we know the diſpoſitions of men, it is natural to become *leſs anxious* about their welfare. Had Brutus known, when he ſtabb'd Cæſar, the depravity of his countrymen, their vice, their ingratitude, their debauchery, and their total want of all thoſe things which are neceſſary to enable people to be free, or to entitle them to be happy, he would have ſuſpended the blow as unneceſſary and unjuſt; and the event proved, that if he had done ſo

it

it would have been better for himſelf and for his country. The Roman Emperors, who afterwards knew the blackeſt ſide of the people over whom they reigned, and who had frequently themſelves riſen from a low ſtation, ſeldom ſtudied to make their people happy: they ſeem to have conſidered them as being a number of banditti warring againſt each other; and that, provided the ſtate was preſerved, the misfortunes of individuals were of little importance.

JOSEPH. Do you then ſuppoſe, that it was merely owing to their knowledge of the depravity of the people, that the Emperors were, for the moſt part, bad men themſelves?

BENJAMIN. I do not pretend to say that it actually was so, though I am much inclined to believe it was; and all the experience that I have had confirms me in my opinion. It has been my constant observation, that all judges, and administrators of justice, are careful of the sentences they pronounce, exactly in proportion as they have a value or esteem for the men concerning whom they decide; and that if it is a cause between two men of bad character, they seldom consider it as a matter of conscience to be at great pains about the decision: this is a very natural feeling, and I must confess I do not think it altogether unjust.

JOSEPH. Well then, those books that tell us of the depravity of mankind, and

and even this converſation in which you tell me, that the better I know mankind, the leſs pains I ſhall be at to govern them well, tends to make me a worſe Emperor, by making me leſs anxious about the welfare of thoſe over whom Providence has placed me.

BENJAMIN. I am not of that opinion: if, Sir, you were a young man who had never reaſoned or judged for yourſelf, I believe it might be ſo; but when the opinions of men are once fixed, it is neither writing nor ſpeaking that can alter them--nothing leſs than actual experience, which indeed ſpeaks home to the heart, can change any adopted opinion. When men are young, all information, as it comes nearly through the ſame channels, has nearly an equal claim to their at-

attention; but it is not ſo at a riper period: former opinions already rooted, and perhaps confirmed by obſervation, are too ſtrong to be diſpoſſeſſed by inſtruction, in whatever ſhape it comes, unleſs it is as *experience*. Were I to chuſe a man for the conducting of a plot, or ſome enterprize, which was to be effected by an application to the intereſt of individuals, I ſhould certainly chuſe the man who was the beſt acquainted with the human mind; who could apply either to the honeſt man or to the aſſaſſin in his own way, and who could ſuit his rewards and promiſes to the different men: but were I to chuſe a good King, I ſhould certainly wiſh to fix on a man who had a good opinion of mankind, rather than becauſe he knew them well.

Jos.

JOSEPH. You will allow, however, that Auguſtus Cæſar was an exception to that rule; for though perhaps one of the moſt crafty young men that ever exiſted, yet he became a juſt and a good emperor.

BENJAMIN. The caſe of Auguſtus does indeed ſeem as far as a ſingle inſtance may go to refute my opinion; but the real caſe with Auguſtus was, that he had little heart at all: he was a man diveſted of every feeling except ſuch as attend *prudence*, which, united with ſtrong abilities, enabled him to do wonders. When he waded to the throne it was through blood, and whether that of friends or enemies it made to him but little difference—the ſame ideas of his own intereſt governed him throughout; he pro-

proſcribed his friends, or pardoned his enemies, with the ſame indifference: luckily for Rome, the diviſions and the ſlaughter which had deſtroyed many of the moſt factious, and intimidated thoſe who remained, made it his intereſt to ſheath the ſword of deſtruction, and to rule well, his good ſenſe, which fitted him to act with prudence upon every occaſion, was ſtill his guide, and certainly, in the end, made him a bleſſing to his country; but I am perſuaded, that the heart of Auguſtus ſcarcely ever voted in any of his tranſactions.

JOSEPH. I muſt confeſs that I believe it was really, in a great meaſure, as you ſay; yet ſtill I feel a very ſtrong inclination to become better acquainted with the nature of men; and I regret

regret exceedingly, that the ſituation in which I am placed has put an intimate acquaintance with them out of my power.

BENJAMIN. I muſt explain, more particularly and diſtinctly, what I mean to ſay. To underſtand the nature of the human mind, is certainly, in ſome meaſure, neceſſary: we neither know what will make men happy, nor how to do it, without that; my meaning only is to be underſtood thus far: that were the weak ſides, were the vices, the ſelfiſhneſs of mankind well known to Princes, they would conſider their happineſs as an object not ſo very deſerving of attention. There is, however, one part of the character of men with which I think every King ſhould be acquainted, and which

which if you perhaps had known might have prevented ſome of thoſe regulations which you have introduced of late years into your dominions.

JOSEPH. You cannot poſſibly do me a greater favour than by making remarks on my own conduct, and particularly on the *regulations* that I have made ſince I came to the throne. Whatever I might gain or loſe by a nearer view of mankind, I ſhall certainly loſe nothing by an acquaintance with myſelf. I have frequently gone in diſguiſe, both in Germany and in France, that I might know what the world ſaid of me; but I have not been very ſucceſsful. In France people do not ſpeak truly about crowned heads, and in Germany a ſtranger, ſuch as I ap-

I appeared, does not eaſily learn any man's private opinions; for though I have heard myſelf ſometimes praiſed, and ſometimes blamed, I have never had the happineſs to hear a good criticiſm on my conduct. Engliſh news-papers ſometimes ſpeak a little to the purpoſe, and I confeſs I have more than once been corrected by them; but then they are not well informed as to facts, and have frequently diſtinguiſhed me by pretending great wiſdom and information when they have been quite ignorant.

BENJAMIN. Your arrangements, Sir, have met with my moſt unbounded approbation in one point of view; for who but muſt admire a Monarch poſſeſſed of ſuch extenſive power, who never has once exerted it but with an in-

intention to increaſe the happineſs of his ſubjects? but I have ſometimes thought the *enthuſiaſm of arrangement* has carried you too far. Reformation is generally in ſome degree oppreſſive, and it is perhaps as well to let evils die away, as to expel them with convulſive violence. It was hard at once to deprive ſo many eccleſiaſtics of bread. I own that churchmen were very proper objects of reform, and that there is injuſtice, as well as want of policy, in allowing the idle to live upon and conſume the labours of the induſtrious; but the individuals deſerved *pity* rather than *puniſhment*. I was told, that there were many men of real worth who could not dig, and who were aſhamed to beg; whoſe youth had been ſpent in that eaſe and affluence which

which men of true piety deſerve to enjoy, and who in their old age, when their hairs were grown grey, were reduced to the pitiable neceſſity of receiving, with an abaſhed countenance, the voluntary relief of the benevolent. I did not indeed blame the intention, but I could not approve of the manner. Men who were brought up in idleneſs by the religious benefactions of our fathers, have a right to demand our ſupport. The wealth of this world is transferred from the father to the ſon; and thoſe who left us that, had at leaſt a claim ſo far, that we ſhould not directly undo what they had done. It is upon no better right than this that princes ſucceed to the dominion of their fathers—over their perſonal property they have indeed a claim of a ſuperior nature,

nature, the claim of inheritance; but as kingdoms are not *property*, but a grant from the people, they are of a nature ſimilar to any other kind eſtabliſhed by the public. This claim is a ſtrong one—a very ſtrong one indeed—for dethroned kings are objects that attract the pity of mankind more than any other ſituation to which human nature can be reduced: it ſeems a breach of contract on the part of the number to the ruin or miſery of the individual. Although the aim of freeing induſtry from burdens was ſurely a good one, yet I diſapproved highly of the means that was uſed. The principle upon which you acted was good, but reformation at the beſt is dangerous when carried into execution with violence, it then becomes like a two-edged ſword, cutting both ways;

ways; and in this very caſe the purpoſe might have been fully anſwered, by letting the evil die away. The life of man is but ſhort, and the danger was by no means imminent to the nation; ſo that it would have been juſt as well without heaping miſery and adverſity upon individuals.

Jos. It muſt, indeed, be confeſſed, that I went to work by too *near* a road; and I am ſo ſenſible of it now, that I ſhall ſettle a ſmall income for life upon every man who was thus *unfairly* deprived of his ſubſiſtance by my *indiſcriminating* reformation. I muſt, however ſay, that it never occurred to me, that the ſame purpoſe might have been equally well anſwered by leſs violent meaſures. It is a difficult thing to have great power,

power, and not to uſe it when we are about to remove an evil, that is very apparent and very obnoxious.

BENJAMIN. The remedy which you propoſe for alleviating thoſe evils which have been inadvertently brought upon individuals, is truly worthy of an Emperor. It will deſervedly affix to your name immortal honour, and it will convince mankind in future, when they murmur at your meaſures, that if there is any oppreſſion *it is not intended.* I am alſo of opinion that while it ſtands in a high rank as a humane determination, it ſtands no leſs ſo as a wiſe and prudent one.

JOSEPH. I have an intention of aboliſhing maſonry in my dominions, it

it ſeems to me to be an impoſition, and therefore is an object of my diſlike. What is your opinion on this ſubject?

BENJAMIN. Why truly I do not ſee any great degree of wiſdom in it—it is a folly, no doubt, and an enthuſiaſtic whim, but not an uſeleſs one. It tends to teach men honour in one point, and is of ſervice to morality and virtue. Beſides, men are not perfect beings, and will have their foibles and fooliſh diverſions; and it is hard not to allow them to have them in their own way.

JOSEPH. Would you then adviſe the Bacchanalian rites to be admitted, and any ſort of meetings that the looſe-

neſs, or bigotry, or fanaticiſm of mankind may produce?

BENJAMIN. Certainly not; there is a point at which to ſtop. It ſhould undoubtedly be proved, that the meetings are harmleſs, at leaſt as much ſo as thoſe other diverſions that men purſue under the name of pleaſure. Maſonry rather tends to favour the cauſe of virtue; but it muſt at the ſame time be owned, that it is raiſed to an imaginary dignity by its members; and is therefore, in ſome degree, a trick. On that account it merits ſome reprehenſion; but if tricks were excluded from ſociety, I am afraid the bond of their union would be broken. What are crowns and ſcepters, and ſtars and garters, but tricks?—they neither confer virtue nor underſtanding;

ing. Mankind muſt have oſtenſible marks, at leaſt as all men from the moſt poliſhed ſtate of ſociety to that of the rudeſt barbarian employ thoſe, both in religion and government, we have as much reaſon to believe that they are neceſſary as any other cuſtom that is univerſally practiſed among men.

JOSEPH. Whatever appears to be a cheat, I abhor. I wiſh to improve the underſtandings of men by expelling every ſpecies of ſuperſtition, and whatever is contrary to reaſon and good ſenſe. Now, Maſonry ſeems to me to be the very eſſence of deception; and of a moſt unaccountable kind: it at firſt aſtoniſhedme not a little, but that aſtoniſhment ended in diſpleaſure at thoſe men,

who, with all the gravity of deep myſtery, hold up a ſhadow to the wonder of a credulous world.

BENJAMIN. Such deceptions, ſtrange as it may appear, have however been of great ſervice to mankind; and while they ſeem to have enſlaved, they have tended to enlighten the human mind. The fine arts, which lead the way to every ſort of knowledge that is elegant or refined, have been greatly encouraged by the ſuperſtition of mankind, which has raiſed more magnificent buildings and monuments, in all ages, than either vanity or taſte. Mankind, induſtrious mankind, employed in weaving cloth, and making iron; unmixed with thoſe who follow employments that are much leſs ſolid, and perhaps leſs valuable, are a deſ-

a deſpicable race of mortals: their minds may not indeed be leſs virtuous, but they are much nearer the level of the beaſts. I am convinced, that if mankind are taken in the groſs, we are as much indebted to the enthuſiaſtic and the whimſical, as to thoſe who follow ſolid induſtry. It is indeed become faſhionable to praiſe that meaner ſort of induſtry, and to dignify the arts that produce food and clothes by the name of the *uſeful arts*. I am an old man, and if I were ſo inclined, cannot now change my opinions with every gale; but though I confeſs, that food and clothes are more neceſſary to man's exiſtence than any other thing, and that therefore the acquiſition of the principal neceſſaries is deſervedly the firſt object; yet I would wiſh to draw a diſtinction between

what is neceſſary to ſociety in a rude ſtate, and in a civilized one. I maintain, that to poliſhed minds the fine arts are not leſs neceſſary than thoſe we call uſeful; and I would as ſoon take up my abode in the hut of the ſavage Indian, as live in a ſtate where no arts were known or admitted but thoſe that are called *uſeful*. I am for letting mankind follow their own whims if they are innocent, and Maſonry among others; though it might perhaps be aboliſhed without any particularly great loſs to ſociety.

JOSEPH. I ſhould permit thoſe people to take their own way, if their oſtentation and vanity were leſs inſufferable: they are a ſort of burleſque upon thoſe real diſtinctions that are neceſſary for the government and ſubordination

dination of ſociety, by laviſhing the titles of Grand and Noble Grand upon what is, in reality, a ſhadow. I do not conſider Maſonry as being perfectly harmleſs; and I ſhall never countenance or protect deception and abſurdity in whatever ſhape they may appear.

BENJAMIN. The pleaſures of man are, in a great degree, ideal; and it affords him more happineſs to get leave to go wrong in his own way, than in trivial affairs, to be forced to do right; I am therefore a great enemy to all reſtraints that have not ſome important good in view, as every reſtraint is, ſo far as it encroaches on liberty, a real and a certain evil. The corners and the ſharp points of all innovations and reform ſhould be rounded

off and ſmoothed as much as poſſible. I am a ſubject, and I feel for thoſe who are obliged to ſubmit to the will of another. I have ſpent the greateſt part of my life in endeavouring to ſecure liberty to my country; and I glory in having been one of thoſe men who riſked their lives in the cauſe of freedom. I have lived a life of viciſſitude and of change, and have experienced a great number of thoſe inconveniences under which men are laid by the laws of the community in which they live. If the two extremes in almoſt every caſe were not nearly equally bad, it would be an eaſy matter for thoſe who have unlimited power to reform mankind; but as excellence is but a *ſingle point*, it is very difficult: even order and method, that are ſo neceſſary to happineſs, when

when carried too far bring extreme pain; for though freedom does not give ſupreme happineſs, the privation of it certainly makes the thinking part of mankind very miſerable, and ſuppreſſes genius more than any other thing whatever. The Empire of China, by whatever means it may have attained it, is a very complete ſyſtem of order, at leaſt it is the moſt complete that we have ever ſeen; yet the people are very far from being happy, nay, they are the very oppoſite of happineſs, and the oppoſite of genius too; for though arts have made ſome progreſs in that country, yet we muſt draw a line of diſtinction between thoſe arts and diſcoveries which time muſt produce among a civilized people, and thoſe which a ſuperior degree of genius introduces and improves a-

mong a new people. The Chineſe ſtand ſtill in the arts—the Europeans advance in a rapid career, and have far outſhone the Oriental people in thoſe improvements which require real genius. The application of ſails to a waggon might naturally have been ſuggeſted by obſervation to a man of little or no genius, and ſo might printing by cutting the letters on a ſingle block. Chance invents, but genius is neceſſary to improvement. In China, things ſtop at the invention, and continue to be practiſed as they were at firſt ſuggeſted—in Europe, nothing ſtops at that ſtage, not even for a ſhort period, for men go on in a perpetual courſe of improving whatever is once diſcovered, until it appears to want improvement no more. It does not indeed certainly follow,

that

that the exact ſubordination and order is the cauſe of this difference in the inventive powers, but I confeſs I think it is the turn of character that it naturally gives. The cuſtom that is eſtabliſhed of uſing with veneration the ſame modes that were tranſmitted down to them by their forefathers, which takes away that deſire and love for what is new, that ſo univerſally pervades Europeans, and occaſions moſt of the changes, and, of conſequence, moſt of the improvements in manners—for theſe, as well as for other reaſons, I am a ſtrong advocate for letting people have their own way, wherever it is innocent; and I think this is particularly neceſſary with the Germans, who are naturally not ſo remarkable for eccen-

tricity of genius as they are for regularity and order.

JOSEPH. I indeed begin to think that I have not been quite right in my ideas concerning improvement; and that there is a debtor ſide of the account as well as a creditor. How difficult it is for a Ruler to think right; and what pain it gives one ſo deſirous of advancing the good of their country as I am, not to be able to do it!

I ſhould apprehend, that in different ſtates of ſociety the regulations that are neceſſary muſt be very various. I ſuppoſe that in America, for inſtance, notwithſtanding what has been ſaid reſpecting the elegant and the uſeful arts, and without regard to the queſtion which deſerves the

the preference, you find it neceſſary to give the preference to the latter; and I ſhould think, that while you remain ſo far behind European nations in wealth, and the conveniencies of life, it would be unwiſe and improper to do otherwiſe: as a man in ordinary life is reckoned a fool who buys ornaments or finery while he is in want of neceſſary food and clothing.

Benjamin. Certainly in America it is exactly as you have ſaid; and I have uſed many endeavours, and conſtantly been employed in perſuading my countrymen to attend to huſbandry, breeding cattle, and manufacturing thoſe coarſe materials which are neceſſary to the lower claſs. Our luxuries, which ought to be few, we ſhould purchaſe with the overplus of this

this ſort of labour; but we muſt not attempt to manufacture luxuries for ourſelves.

JOSEPH. If I were not Emperor of Germany, I ſhould rejoice in being an Emperor in America. That immenſe dominion, bleſt with an excellent ſoil and climate, and the ſtamina of real greatneſs, would afford a noble field for thoſe improvements and regulations which I could introduce. An arret, prohibiting thoſe uſeleſs luxuries which Britain has poured in upon that county in ſuch abundance, would be of immenſe utility. Theſe luxuries have certainly tended much to the prevention of thoſe rude arts upon which America muſt depend for many ages yet to come.

BEN-

BENJAMIN. The idea of ſuch an Empire may be pleaſing in proſpect, but I am certain the poſſeſſion would be quite the contrary. America is too thinly inhabited to pay for one regular government. Mankind muſt be collected into a ſmaller ſpot before they admit of being properly governed; by that I mean that there muſt be a greater number in proportion to the extent of the ground before a ſtrict government can be eſtabliſhed with any tolerable degree of eaſe, or to any good purpoſe.

JOSEPH. The Empreſs of all the Ruſſias governs a people extending over a wider country, than the Roman Empire in its greateſt glory, yet her revenues are not equal to one fourth of thoſe of France, nor are the

the people more numerous, yet ſhe maintains a more arbitrary ſway than even the Gallic monarch.

BENJAMIN. Yes, but then the North-eaſt Ruſſians in Kamſkatka, and all that immenſe country are barbarians, having neither civilization nor ſea coaſt, which are the two things that make men formidable; beſides this, the government in Ruſſia, I mean in the more remote parts, is chiefly a government, like that of Poland, maintained by the Lords and great men over their tenants. A government the moſt diſtant poſſible from the ſtrict notions of juſtice that you entertain.—Juſtice is in all caſes a very expenſive thing, and it is ſo from its very nature. Judges muſt be well educated and well informed

formed men, and muſt employ much time to inveſtigate cauſes; beſides evidence is difficult and expenſive to procure, and mankind require to be gathered pretty cloſely together, and the lower ranks muſt poſſeſs a conſiderable ſhare of wealth before it can be well or univerſally diſtributed, and until it is, the government muſt always be very incomplete. You have perhaps, Sir, frequently encountered the difficulties of governing the Germans, who are the deſcendants of the braveſt nations in the world, but the difficulties that ariſe in a new country like America, I am inclined to believe are far greater, than any with which you have ever met.

JOSEPH

JOSEPH. What is your opinion then, Sir, of the government and politics that will take place in America now that freedom is indiſputably obtained? I believe I ſhould, in the firſt place, rather enquire by what cauſes the revolution which ſeparated that country from Britain, was brought about? and what were the motives of thoſe who were the moſt active in effecting it? It has been often ſaid, and I imagine pretty generally believed, that the ambition of ſome individual men was the cauſe of thoſe great exertions that you have made in favour of your country's freedom.

BENJAMIN. The ambition of which I may be poſſeſſed, I do not chuſe to eſtimate, but I ſhould doubt the ſolidity of my brain, and execrate the feelings

feelings of my mind, if I had either been fooliſh enough, or wicked enough to attempt laying my country in aſhes to raiſe myſelf. I never expected any thing farther than a ſhare of that honour which I participate with thoſe other men who riſqued every thing in their country's cauſe, an honour which I would not exchange to be ſeated on a throne. I know well, that in England, private purpoſes were thought to be the motives of the moſt active, but men arrived to that ſtate of wealth, refinement, and depravity, to which they have come in England, are no judges of the feelings of people, in infant ſtates. In England the caſe is, that there are very few men who put the good of their country in any degree of compariſon with that of themſelves, and when by accident

ſuch

ſuch a perſon appears, he does not get credit for his feelings.—In England a man who adheres to principle and not to party, is always reckoned either a fool or a knave. I have lived many years in London, and am as well acquainted with their modes of thinking on theſe ſubjects, as if I had paſſed my whole life there.—In America men feel very differently. I have not the partiality for my own countrymen, to think that they are narally more virtuous, but the different ſtate of ſociety is the cauſe. A member of a new ſtate, particularly if it is not rich, can have no hopes from peculation, and muſt be a very bad man if he is not a patriot. It is juſt the oppoſite of this in England, where the wealth of the ſtate and the numerous

examples

examples of unmerited promotion, fill the minds of all men with a notion that the more they can get by the ſtate the better it is, and that it is all fair game. Thus the people in England eſtimating us by themſelves, could not fail to be widely miſtaken. Had I lived in England, I believe I might juſt have done and thought as they do; but providence having thrown me into a new ſtate of ſociety, I was a patriot, and I firmly believed firſt when I began to eſpouſe the cauſe of my country, that I was more likely to die the death of a traitor, than to live one of the deliverers of America.—

JOSEPH. You amaze me! and is there ſo little patriotiſm in England? I have always conſidered it as a country

country producing more patriots than all the other kingdoms in Europe added together, or than the world has ſeen ſince the days of Greece and Rome. Is it poſſible that there are ſo few who prefer the intereſts of their country to that of themſelves?

BENJAMIN. I ſpoke of the people in general, for there are many worthy individuals, who I believe are true patriots; men, whoſe characters I eſteem, and whoſe principles I revere, though they are by no means the moſt numerous, and they are always the leaſt important claſs in the ſtate. The general current, which is very ſtrong and very corrupt, runs with a rapidity that admits not of the exertion of the diſintereſted and the patriotic party, and thoſe

thoſe men who might ſhine as patriots in better times or in worſe, and who may yet one day prop a falling ſtate, are at preſent glad to ſhrink from an attempt which would be uſeleſs and vain: thus the few real patriots in England are inactive through neceſſity.

JOSEPH. Does the King of England then encourage thoſe men who are willing to take care of the affairs of their country for their own advantage, and diſcourage the true patriots, that they are obliged to confine themſelves to a private ſtation?

BENJAMIN. By no means: the King of England is, I believe one of the trueſt patriots this day on the

Engliſh ground, but he wants a little of your power of publiſhing arrets before he can ſhew it. The Conſtitution of the Engliſh Government, which is in my opinion, the freeſt in the world, is by no means of a permanent nature, and is unhinging by degrees; every day ſees it loaded with freſh incumbrances, and unleſs the evil works its own cure, I would give but little for its greatneſs.—The government is loſing all nerve and vigour—originally, party had little power, unleſs it had ſome right on its ſide, but it is not ſo now. I think I underſtand the original nature of the Engliſh Government, and what it ſhould ſtill be. The Parliament is not intended to be managed by the Court, but it is expected, in all caſes, to ſupport the rights of the people againſt the

the encroachments of the King; neither is the parliament intended to be as a clog upon thoſe exertions which it is neceſſary for the nation to make in defence of its rights againſt other powers. Yet the Parliament of England does in reality act as the latter, and ſubmit to the former.

By having eſtabliſhed it as a principle in their Government, that the Miniſter ſhall carry every important point, or be no longer Miniſter; it follows that the Court muſt always have a Miniſter, to whom the Parliament will give its ſupport; that is to ſay, if the Miniſter is to continue in place, the Parliament muſt vote as he would wiſh; and if he is not to be continued as Miniſter, the Parliament thwarts his meaſures, that being their mode of

turning a Miniſter out. The Parliament then ſubmits to his ſucceſſor, as it once did to him, though his meaſures are in general directly oppoſite, ſo that by this means, although they change miniſters, yet they are always obedient to the Miniſter of the day, whoſe chief buſineſs, therefore, is to ſupport his influence in Parliament. The party that is turned out always oppoſes meaſures of thoſe who diſplaced them, ſo that, although the points which they diſpute are carried, it is with ſuch difficulty and delay, that the nation is hampered and embarraſſed beyond expreſſion.—It was chiefly to this circumſtance that America owed her freedom; for although the plan was pretty well laid, I believe, had Britain purſued

thoſe

thoſe decided meaſures, that it would have done when the ſyſtem of liberty was leſs perfect, but the power of the King leſs abridged, we ſhould not have been ſucceſsful in procuring our freedom in America.

JOSEPH. Surely nothing in this world was ever ſo abſurd, and ſo directly oppoſite to common ſenſe, as a nation divided by conteſts and diſſentions concerning a foreign enemy after war is once declared.—It might have been a very proper ſubject for debate, whether war was to be declared, or America abandoned; but to debate at home, while they were fighting abroad, was the ſtrangeſt meaſure I ever heard of being practiſed.—I think it would be no infringement on the liberties of the Engliſh Parliaments, if their powers

were in ſome degree altered.—Suppoſe the King were not to be allowed to proclaim war without the advice of his Parliament; but that on the other hand, when once engaged in hoſtility, there ſhould be no oppoſition to his meaſures, at leaſt, not that perpetual and violent oppoſition that prevents ſucceſs, by retarding and checking exertion. I think this inſtitution would be better, for theſe reaſons. Firſt, as war is the moſt material tranſaction of a King's Reign, I think if Parliaments are to interfere in any thing beſides the privileges of the people, they ought to have a power to do ſo in a proclamation of war: and in the ſecond place, I think, that as Parliaments would then have a vote in declaring war, they would with confidence allow Miniſters to

proſecute it with vigour; but the moſt powerful argument in favour of what is here propoſed, is the abſurdity of the preſent mode. Succeſs in war depends upon *deciſive meaſures, and a free exertion of ſtrength againſt the enemy*; and as war is of all poſſible meaſures the moſt ſerious, it ought to be moſt deliberately weighed before it is begun, and moſt reſolutely puſhed afterwards.

BENJAMIN. They do neither of theſe in England: half meaſures are what they take, which are ruinous in almoſt every caſe. We knew well enough in America this fault of the Engliſh Government, and that it would be much in our favour in effecting a Revolution, yet the ſucceſs was infinitely beyond our expectation. We were utterly

aſtoniſhed to find the diviſions that took place in England.

JOSEPH. Was a complete revolution intended or expected in America when the tumults at Boſton, which preceded hoſtilities, took place?

BENJAMIN. Long before any appearances of open war exiſted, the ſeeds of ſeparation and diſcord between the two nations were deeply rooted both in Europe and America. The union of Britain with Britiſh America, if it could have been preſerved, would one day have deſtroyed that equal balance which the European powers have ſo wiſely ſtudied to preſerve. Thus while the apprehenſion of moſt nations were awakened, their envy was alſo excited by obſerving the ſuperior wealth

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and power of Britain. France, which of all nations lays the deepeſt ſchemes for future greatneſs, and which is moſt immediately oppoſed by European policy to England, claims however the merit of having allayed the fears of other European nations in this caſe. A plan was laid in Paris, of which the American revolution was the firſt part; but the laſt part of the game is yet to play, and will certainly not be played in my life-time. You, Sir, who are a much younger man, may live to ſee the end of it; and if I am not miſtaken, will find it prudent to take ſome part in what may one day regard your own dominions.

JOSEPH. I hope that I may be admitted into a ſecret that cannot certainly affect America, which has al-

ready gained the point in diſpute, particularly as the affair may one day be mine.

BENJAMIN. Though I am the avowed advocate of my own country, and ſhall, for the few years that I may yet have to live, certainly endeavour to maintain her intereſts againſt all other nations, yet am I alſo the general friend of mankind; and as I have never approved of the deſigns of France upon the whole, after I have explained the manner of the Revolution of America, I ſhall make you acquainted with a plan laid down by the French Cabinet in the year 1768, which has hitherto been adhered to, and has ſucceeded ſo far as it has yet been tried.

JOSEPH.

JOSEPH. The part relating to America is then the firſt to be conſidered.

BENJAMIN. The genius of the Engliſh government is ſtudied in France with the ſame attention that the artful ſervant ſtudies the humours of his maſter, and for the ſame reaſon, that by attending to them they may ſerve themſelves. It is well known in France that England when rich, as it always is at the end of ten or twelve years of peace, becomes very overbearing, and is for a complete monoply of whatever is good or deſirable; added to this, that her attention is generally engroſſed by *temporary* objects. Soon after the peace of 1763 was concluded, it was determined in France to abet what-

ever might tend to divide America from Britain; and it was never doubted, but that every attempt that they could make to aſſert their independence would be looked upon with contempt in England, and that by degrees the minds of people in America might be alienated from the mother country. When things were likely to proceed to extremities, it was intended that aſſiſtance in money ſhould be given to the Americans, and every other aſſiſtance that they might want promiſed.

The various attempts that the Britiſh Parliament made to lay arbitrary taxes on the Americans, rouſed their reſentment; and the irreſolute manner in which they were enforced excited their contempt: ſo that by degrees the Americans were weaned in their affections from

from England, and confirmed in the opinion that *they might be free.*

Taxation is never endured with eaſe, until it has been firmly eſtabliſhed by cuſtom: and in America it was abhorred. Children were carried out in their nurſes arms, to ſee their fathers ſet off from home to pay taxes to the King; and they were taught to execrate that King, and to conſider him as an oppreſſor, and themſelves as ſlaves; and, what was worſe, ſlaves who might be free. There were many people in America who preſerved what they called loyalty to their King, but the far greater portion preferred their country; and I glory in having belonged to this party. Before there was any open diſturbance full ten years paſſed, every day of which wean-

ed the minds of the Americans from the Engliſh Government, and confirmed me in the opinion that whatever proſperity America might enjoy as a free country, it could never have any as the dependent of England. I determined, as did a number more of my countrymen, "either to ſee her grievances redreſſed, "or die in redreſſing them." We tried the moſt peaceable method firſt, and with what degree of ſucceſs the world has ſeen. England, in the hour of her inſolence, as it has very properly been ſtyled, miſtook her own intereſt, her ſtrength, and that of America, at the ſame inſtant. We were deſpiſed and abuſed in a manner that ſhewed thoſe concerned had neither good ſenſe nor good breeding; they were neither patriots nor gentlemen;

men; and, I muſt own, I felt a degree of triumph, in being a party at the ſigning the independence of America in thoſe very clothes in which I had ſuffered abuſe from the tools of faction, who, to gain their private ends, were very violent in the cauſe of their country.

The deputation from the American States (at that time Provinces) returned to aſſure their countrymen that there was to be no redreſs, and that they muſt either fight or ſubmit. Then was the critical moment; and to unite was the difficulty. A well-timed exertion on the part of Britain might have then intimidated the people, and brought their leaders to the ſcaffold.

For-

Fortunately for the Americans, they were enraged but not intimidated by the feeble meaſures of the year 1775, and they united firmly in one cauſe. The buſineſs was from that moment done—France was ready to aſſiſt, and Spain to follow. Europe was happy to look on; and the purpoſe was, not to fight with Britain, but to involve her in expence, and protract the war. The ſucceſs with which theſe united efforts were crowned is well known, and therefore unneceſſary to mention. I meant only to ſpeak of the cauſe of the Revolution, and of thoſe plans which preceded it, and are not publickly known.

JOSEPH. Do you then firmly believe, that America might have been preſerved to Britain, if a ſtrong exertion had

had been made at firſt, but that after it was fairly begun it was impoſſible?

BENJAMIN. I cannot doubt it; neither did the French doubt it; it was certain, that intimidation might have *prevented* union, but it was equally certain, that men who had rebelled, and that in ſo intereſting a cauſe, would never ſubmit in a voluntary manner; it was alſo known, that to force ſuch an extent of country was out of the queſtion. It was induſtriouſly concealed from Britain that France meant to interfere; and upon this occaſion the credulity, as well as the incredulity of the Britiſh Court, was beyond example. They believed the amicable profeſſions of the French, when they had actually prepared for war; and they diſbelieved every report

port that informed them of the ſerious nature of the diſturbances in America, after they were begun: ſo that the Court of London ſcarcely believed that there was an unarmed mob aſſembled in America, when her freedom was nearly as certain as it is at this day.

JOSEPH. The information that was tranſmitted to London muſt have been very imperfect, or very falſe, elſe they never could have committed ſo great a miſtake as to let a rebellion get to ſuch a degree of ſtrength, before they endeavoured vigouroufly to ſuppreſs it.

BENJAMIN. There were numbers of people in London who knew very well the ſtate of affairs in America; but

but no one who maintained the importance of that country could get admittance into the houſe of any of the miniſterial party more than once; while thoſe who affected to make light of the affair were liſtened to, rewarded, and careſſed.

JOSEPH. Mighty God!—is it poſſible that a ſtate exiſts, in which ſuch madneſs, ſuch negligence, and obſtinacy, is countenanced? O England, England! how little art thou indebted to thy Rulers for thy proſperity!! Often has the world ſeen folly united with ſuffering and repentance; but here is one inſtance, where the extremes of folly and proſperity go hand in hand!!!

BENJA

BENJAMIN. To all appearance they do. England ſtill holds her head ſuperior to the blow, nor is it from her ſeparation from America that ſhe has to fear a fall. It was natural enough, perhaps, but it was a very great miſtake to ſuppoſe, that the ſupporters of the Revolution in America were in any degree actuated by enmity towards Britain. Every impartial judge might have ſeen that it was on our part a war of *neceſſity*, and not of *choice*. It has been prettily enough ſaid, that the firſt Engliſhmen who ſettled in America took over with them, and planted there, the ſeeds of liberty, their favourite tree: this tree, ſo much cheriſhed by the inhabitants of Britain in their own iſland, they wiſhed to deſtroy on the Continent of America; and we, to preſerve it,

it, riſked our lives and fortunes. It was certain, that unleſs we were either taxed by ourſelves, or by our Repreſentatives, our freedom was at an end; and the Parliament of England undoubtedly thought ſo, elſe they would not have riſked ſo much to eſtabliſh that point. Revenue was not the matter in queſtion, but *the mode* by which it was to be raiſed: a point, except for the conſequences to which it led, of no great importance to England, while we, on the contrary, were obliged to fight or ſubmit. It does not appear that the loſs to Britain was very great, for what has happened muſt ſooner or later have come to paſs. America was neither peopled with ſavages, nor with an enervated race, but by Engliſhmen; and it was impoſſible that it could remain long

ſubject

ſubject to any country. Beſides, America never was a ſource of wealth to England; for, till about forty years ago, the trade between the two countries was only to a very ſmall amount; and during a later period, though the trade was very exttenſive, it conſiſted of goods which the Engliſh merchants and agents forced to the American market, but for which we were not able to pay, as the produce which we ſent in return did not amount to more than one-fourth part of the value; and of ſilver and gold we had none to give. There certainly was a great miſtake in thinking that we wiſhed to humble England; for my part, I can ſay for myſelf that I never wiſhed it; nor did I think the ſeparation of America could lower the importance, or deſtroy the wealth

of

of Britain, although I was not ſorry to ſee its pride a little reduced. America, it is true, is my country, and patriotiſm is my pride; but, abſtracting from that, the happieſt periods of my life have been ſpent in England —I enjoyed there the company and converſation of a very ſuperior ſet of men to any that are to be found on our Continent. The time will not ſoon arrive when ſcience and philoſophy are to be cultivated in America. But imperfectly governed, and thinly inhabited, fanataciſm and religious ſuperſtition form her moſt prominent features: and the wealth that in old ſtates is tranſmitted from father to ſon, and which affords leiſure and affluence to a conſiderable portion of the human race, is not yet known, in America.

JOSEPH.

JOSEPH. Are the philoſophical people in England communicative and free? How are their manners? Do they join the eaſy friend and good companion with the ſcientific man?

BENJAMIN. They are not ſo much ſo as might be wiſhed, or as they are in France; but there is an openneſs and an honeſty among philoſophers that is ſcarcely to be met with in any other ſet of men. As this claſs of men ſeldom have any intereſted views, and all labour as if in one common cauſe, and as if the ſervants of one maſter, their ſociety (and it is the only one I have known) is quite free from that mental reſervation which too often is to be found in men who are either

either politicians, or men of buſineſs, or poets.

JOSEPH. How did you find it poſſible to ſuit yourſelf to all the different ſtudies to which you have applied, and to the company in which you have at different times been? I ſhould think, that when you was planning the Revolution of America, it muſt have been difficult to diſincumber your mind ſufficiently to enable you to collect the electric fluid from the clouds, and to analyze the moſt ſubtle of all things with that minute attention, and accuracy of obſervation, which you diſplayed.

BENJAMIN. It may indeed, ſeem a little odd, but is not ſo when you hear how it happened.

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Bred at an early period of life to buſineſs, and to mechanical labour, natural philoſophy attracted my attention, and awakened my ambition, when but yet a very young man. Neceſſity afterwards made me me a politician; and an attachment to my early ſtudies ſtill retained a place in my mind. Beſides, this turn for philoſophical reſearch was of great uſe to me as a political man. In the firſt place, it raiſed me in the opinion of men, and got me admittance among a ſet of company, from which as a politician only, I ſhould have been ſhut out; add to this, that by dividing my character into two, it put moſt people off their guard. I was Franklin, the *Philoſopher* to the world, long after I had in fact, become Franklin the *Politician*; and it is not yet may years

ſince

ſince I was known by that latter appellation. As to the mode of adapting myſelf to different company, that was quite natural to me. I never puſhed my converſation or company on any man; neither did I ever affect ſilence or diſtance to any perſon who deſerved reſpect. I never ſtruggled to give the turn to converſation, but rather humoured, and fell in with the diſpoſition of the company, and I poſſeſſed a knowledge of men and things, that gave me a great advantage over moſt philoſophers, who are very ſeldom men of obſervation, on the common affairs of life. As I never thought that fame was to be got by conteſting for it, (except by Kings and Emperors) I ſeldom entered much into the liſts of controverſy, and, except the

experiments on electricity, I never attempted to take the lead in any branch of philoſophy, which I believe is the beſt way when one only aims at *Reputation*, but does not aſpire at fame. Perhaps I might not have been able to keep ſuch a command over myſelf, if philoſophy had been my chief object of ambition, which indeed it once was, but ſoon gave place to what I thought was of much greater importance.

JOSEPH. I could willingly part with a conſiderable portion of my dominions, to be able to enter into the ſociety of mankind, in the manner that you have deſcribed, and particularly of Engliſhmen, who being free, may give full vent to their natural capacity and inclinations. They may become

become philoſophers, or ſtateſmen, or warriors, or whatever they pleaſe, ſo that I think there muſt be a very conſiderable degree of perfection of character to be found there.—I have ſome intention of going over to England, when the politics of the Continent will allow me, but when that may be, I do not know, and cannot even gueſs.

BENJAMIN. We are now in France, yet I believe we are not in any danger of ſuffering for our obſervations on this Government, or on its politics; which are in general rather dangerous topics of converſation. I had this little country houſe merely for the ſake of retirement, for being always in the buſtle, does not now ſuit me. I become tired,

and my mind loſes its vigour, till it has reſted for ſome time. I conſider time with thoſe trivial incidents which it brings along with it, as being to the mind what food is to the body. The mind becomes in a degree, empty by exertion, untill recruited by an interval of time.—I have got a field near this, where there is no riſing nor hollow ground. I neither truſt walls, nor trees, nor ſtanding corn, nor even a bed of tulips with a ſecret, but an open plain field, with ſhort graſs, and even there, leaſt there ſhould be a pit dug and covered up, whenever I talk on affairs that might give umbrage to Court, I walk about and ſpeak low. I never commit any very ſecret thing to writing, andtherefore, though concerned in many ſecret tranſac-

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tions, there is no danger of any diſcovery of what I would wiſh to conceal. We may as well uſe the ſame precautions now, and take a walk thither, for though I believe we are perfectly ſafe here, it is better not to truſt to belief. Certainty in theſe caſes is my word.

JOSEPH. Let us then go to the field; I admire and approve of your caution. I have often wondered, as your tranſactions have been both numerous and intricate, that you never ſuffered from any diſcovery, but now my wonder is at an end.

BENJAMIN. My caution is not merely to prevent diſcovery; but that I may have the inward ſatisfaction that no accuſation can

come againſt me, or any of my deſigns and plans be counteracted. Suſpicion and fear, which are the inevitable attendants of an unguarded political life, take away the nerve from action, and the enjoyment from life. There is no man who is unguarded, but muſt ſooner or later feel it attended with great inconveniency, and probably great unhappineſs too.

JOSEPH. A long acquaintance with mankind, added to the inſtruction that is enforced by neceſſity, has made you cautious, and I dare ſay it is now become pleaſing to you. With me it is very different; my natural diſpoſition is unſuſpicious, and the place in life which I have filled, has exempted me in a great degree from

from the neceſſity of being ſo; I feel inclined to repoſe a great confidence in mankind. I was cautioned to beware of his Holineſs at Rome, but I diſregarded the counſel as mean and cowardly, and the event proved that I was right.—Suſpicion ſometimes precipitates misfortunes, but at all times is unworthy of a manly character. What you now propoſe, is only precaution, and I plainly ſee the wiſdom of ſuch meaſures in affairs of great importance.

BENJAMIN. I am not a Roman Catholic, neither do I diſlike the followers of that religion, or of any other that does not make bad men; but I muſt confeſs I ſhould not think myſelf very ſafe, were I a formidable enemy to thoſe men, who not only

can give abſolution from ſin, but are in the practice of letting leaſes in Heaven for all eternity. I diſlike it, becauſe it is a ſort of weapon which we cannot uſe in our own defence; and reſembles in ſome degree our rifle-barreled muſquetry, ſending unerring fate from behind a buſh, that at the ſame inſtant conceals and protects the aſſaſſin. And I do not altogether approve of the indifference, with which you riſqued the Holy vengeance of the head of the church of Rome.

JOSEPH. Had I betrayed any ſymptoms of fear, it would have but increaſed my danger, beſides my mode of living, ſubjects me to aſſaſſination in Vienna, as eaſily as if I was in the conclave at Rome.—Joſeph muſt truſt to the minds of men for his

his protection, he can never ſecure it by any other means.

BENJAMIN. The manners of the times which abhor, or at leaſt which have ceaſed to practice, the uſe of poiſon, or the dagger, are your beſt defence. The moſt virtuous of Kings have been deſtroyed in defiance of the affections of their ſubjects. Henry the Fourth's fate will never be forgotten, nor the death of the Prince of Orange. Two perſonages than whom the hand of the aſſaſſin could not have ſelected any that were more amiable as men, or more valuable as patriots. This however, is a very unneceſſary diſcuſſion; for whether people are in danger or not it is abſolutely certain, that thoſe who are always afraid would be better to be

dead in peace, and in the ſilent grave, than living in terror.

JOSEPH. In that we perfectly agree, and now that we are by ourſelves in a ſafe place, we may converſe on the ſubjects we intended.

BENJAMIN. Then Sir, in the firſt place, I muſt preface what I have to ſay by a few obſervations and facts. The Court of France, or rather the family of the French King, follows a very different object from what is purſued by the Emperor of Germany. In France, the aggrandiſement of the Royal Family, is the firſt object. The happineſs of the people, their riches, and every thing elſe, is but a ſecondary object of attention. It may be compared to the haughty

haughty proprietor of an eſtate, who improves his lands, or depopulates them; or does whatever ſeems to be moſt for his own intereſt, without conſidering the happineſs or the miſery of his people, any more than he does the preſervation of the weeds that ſpring out of the ſoil.—Such is the reigning view of the French Court; to be the firſt family in Europe is the point of ambition; and whether this is to be accompliſhed by lifting up the power of France, or depreſſing other nations, or by both; it has been, and it will continue to be, the conſtant view, and uninterrupted aim of the Houſe of Bourbon.

A book is kept in one of the moſt ſecret parts of a Royal Building in

Paris, in which book each nation in Europe has a place aſſigned for itſelf; ſomething in the manner of a merchant's ledger. France is firſt, Spain next, then England, Holland, the German Empire, Pruſſia, Ruſſia, Portugal, Sweden, and Denmark. Theſe are all the nations on the liſt, and to the beſt of my recollection that is the order in which they follow. Perhaps if the book were to be arranged now, the order might be a little different; but it is a very conſiderable number of years (though I do not know how many) ſince it was begun. There are a number of excellent maps kept in the ſame apartment, to which they have a reference; and every circumſtance that affects in any degree, the political importance of either of theſe nations,

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is regiſtered under the proper head as ſoon as it is known; and with as much accuracy as poſſible. The circumſtance upon which the importance of each country depends, are minutely deſcribed; and in another part of the ſame book is the plan of the French Monarch; that is to ſay, the out-lines of a plan, by which France may be raiſed above her neighbours. This book may, I think, be called the POLITICAL BIBLE of France, and it is preſerved in the Sanctum Sanctorum, with all due care and ſecrecy. The people concerned in the compilation, are men of the firſt rank and fortune, and it is death as well as confiſcation of property and degradation of family, ever to mention the exiſtence of this work. The King of France, I have been

been told has often ſpent three hours at a time conſulting this oracle; and though he has not I believe, ever actually projected any important meaſures himſelf, yet he has become ſo much maſter of the ſubject, as to be able to judge of the expediency, and enter with proper intereſt into the undertaking of his Court.

Different plans have been laid, and this book has been uſed as the foundation of them all. I think it was in the year 1768, that the final plan was adjuſted, though it meets with alterations, and has received ſome additions ſince that time.

The plan formed in the year I mention, was nearly thus. To make England and Holland the firſt objects of

of attack, and to prevent too great a complication of views, it was reſolved, to gain their points with theſe two nations, before any other part of the general plan ſhould be attempted.

On Conſulting the book, the importance of England was found to ariſe from its great manufacturing and commercial excellence at home, from America, the Weſt India Iſlands and the poſſeſſions in Aſia, which at that time were but recently acquired.

The weak ſides of the Engliſh nation were put on the oppoſite ſide of a page, and ſtood thus. The Government, though free and favourable to the internal acquiſition of wealth, ſo clogged

clogged by the cabals of party, that it is incapable of making any bold exertions, and that from its nature this defect was daily increaſing. The national debt being borrowed on perpetuities, muſt always increaſe, unleſs a powerful exertion is made to throw it off, or to pay it off. The latter of theſe is an effort too great to be accompliſhed under ſo heavy a load of taxes as are already exiſting; and the former is a mode that will not be taken, while there remains a power in Government of raiſing a ſingle ſixpence more. As the nation depends on credit, it muſt uſe no undue freedoms with its creditors. This, though a ſlow, brings a *certain* deſtruction. The colonies in America, not very well affected to government, are too extenſive to be long

long retained in ſubjection. The diſtance of the poſſeſſions in India, their extent, and above all, the rebellious diſpoſition of the Eaſtern Princes, will make it eaſy when the time is ripe to ſupport a rebellion. The nature of the Engliſh Court was alſo conſidered as a great foundation for hope. The temporary views of the Miniſters and their ſhort-ſighted policy, with good reaſon, afforded hope to an aſpiring, a far-ſighted, and a deſigning rival.—With ſuch advantages and ſuch defects, did the Engliſh nation appear to the Court of Verſailles; and it was reſolved to level the ſhafts of their ambition at the moſt vulnerable parts. The diſcontents in America, which were not altogether unknown, promiſed to afford the moſt ſpeedy, if not the moſt

effectual

effectual blow to the greatneſs of England. It was determined that if the flames of rebellion could once be lighted up in America, they ſhould never be extinguiſhed, but with the power of the Britiſh Empire on that Continent. France was determined to encourage the diſcontents, to foment, and then to abet a rebellion, and ſhe obtained a ſecret promiſe from Spain to aſſiſt, while the expence with which it would incumber the trade of England, would give a double blow to its proſperity; and ſo ſanguine (M. V——— told me) were their hopes at one time, that it was actually ſuppoſed they might bring *ruin* upon that flouriſhing iſland before the end of the war. How far, and how well the ſchemes of France ſucceeded, we all know: that latter event

event has not indeed, by any means taken place, but the others have. For my own part it gives me infinite pleaſure to perceive that Britain is not yet likely to ſink either under the increaſe of debt, or the loſs of territory.

JOSEPH. Did the plans of the French Cabinet extend any farther then this? What other views had they to humble the pride of Britain, which is yet vulnerable (by their account) in Aſia, and in the Weſt as well as in their trade at home?

BENJAMIN. The plans of France extend much farther. It was determined to obtain a Treaty of Commerce as well as of peace with England, when the war ſhould be at an end;

end; but in that they partly failed; though it is ſtipulated by the peace, that there is to be a Treaty of Commerce, from which however, I do not ſuppoſe, if England is on her guard, they can gain any great advantage. In England the power of party has declared it a bad peace, and the clamour of the public has ſupported that; but the only thing in which France has fairly failed, in my mind, is the peace, which was much more advantageous for England than it could expect, all circumſtances conſidered. The ſtrange turns of faction had placed at the helm of Britiſh affairs, juſt at that moment a very able ſtateſman, and in deſpite of the French Cabinet; and I may alſo add the Britiſh nation, a peace was concluded very favourable

able for Britain, and which, for a while at leaſt, will ſtop the career of French ambition. For my part, I never wiſhed to ſee misfortunes heaped on a country, which had been the parent and the protector of my own; and I am glad to ſee that America is raiſed without ſinking the ſtock from which it ſprung. As I before ſaid, it was intended to obtain, along with a treaty of peace, a treaty of commerce, which by increaſing the connection between the two countries, might in time tranſplant ſome of the Engliſh manufactures and habits of induſtry into France, but there they have not yet ſucceeded; the perſeverance of the French Court, is too great, in this cauſe however, to be foiled long. We ſhall ſee the negociation renewed,

when

when perhaps there will not be ſuch a ſtateſman watching over the intereſts of England.

JOSEPH. I do not wiſh to interrupt your hiſtory of the plans of France, but I am told that this Engliſh Miniſter who foiled the French in the treaty, is a complete courtier, and has loſt the confidence of all parties by his conduct.

BENJAMIN. I am not very well informed on that ſubject, but I believe that ſuppoſed duplicity is very ill founded. Different countries, and different ſtates of ſociety, have not only a variety of faſhions, but right and wrong, honour and diſgrace, and virtue herſelf changes her dreſs and appearance. You Sir, would adhere

here undoubtedly to the old Roman definition of a patriot, and would define him as a man, who would ſerve his country, and knew no man by the name of friend who would not do the ſame. In England the caſe is different. The man who adheres to his friends, that is to his party, whether they are for or againſt the good of his country, is reckoned a virtuous political character, and of conſequence, as in this conſiſts political honour, political depravity is its oppoſite, and is pretty nearly what among the Romans was patriotic virtue. Whoever in England takes this old faſhioned line of conduct, and maintains the place of an independant man, will be conſidered, if rich, a jeſuit, and if poor, as a fool. This I think, is the caſe with that nobleman,

nobleman, whoſe worth may one day be better known to his country, and who ſhould not have accepted of a title that rather diminiſhed than added to his character.

JOSEPH. This is really a very curious fact; but I perceive wherever parties are, it muſt be the caſe in ſome degree. I ſhould be glad to enquire into ſome more public characters in England, but I have already interrupted too much the views and plans of the French Cabinet.

BENJAMIN. I believe I had come to the end of the war, and the failure of the endeavour to decoy over Engliſh induſtry, by an intimate commercial intercourſe, which, if it ſhould be obtained, every meaſure is to be taken

to encourage the manufactures of France: thus, by the time of the expiration of the Treaty ſhe may be able to ſupply herſelf, and, perhaps meet England in other markets alſo. I forgot to obſerve, that the rupture between the Engliſh and the Dutch was a great ſtroke for France, and one that ſhe ſcarcely dared to hope for. Theſe ancient allies were by this means ſeparated, and of courſe each lay more open to the deſigns of France. While the commerce of France is expected to be increaſed, and her manufactures encouraged, it is propoſed, by every internal arrangement poſſible, to prepare, before another war, to attack the Britiſh Settlements in Aſia, and to foment quarrels between the natives and the ſervants of the India Company; in

doing which, (as was done in the caſe of America,) the Dutch are to aſſiſt, as well as the Spaniards. Matters have been even carried ſo far, as to conſider and eſtimate the expence which it will probably coſt England to loſe their poſſeſſions in India; for, *that they are to loſe them*, or to conquer France, Spain, and Holland, is a ſettled point.

JOSEPH. I ſhould be ſorry to ſee this: the power of France would then be too great. I don't much like this part of the plan I muſt confeſs; and if it happens in my life time, I ſhall certainly remonſtrate againſt it.

BENJAMIN. Were you to do ſo, you might, perhaps, prevent the thing. I mean, were you to remon-

ſtrate

ſtrate by ſending an army of an hundred thouſand men as the meſſengers, the *ratio ultima regum* may prevent it, but nothing elſe can.

JOSEPH. I certainly ſhall uſe that argument rather than that Europe ſhould be ſwallowed up by the power of France, which I think might be the ultimate conſequence. Can you tell me at what ſum the expence of that war was eſtimated to amount, on the part of England?

BENJAMIN. Why, yes—It was reckoned that leſs than 80 millions of pounds it could not be; that probably it might amount to 120 millions, and therefore it was put down at 100 millions.

JOSEPH. Upon what principles did they found this calculation?—Did they not calculate that it would coſt themſelves as much?

BENJAMIN. They eſtimated from former caſes. The number of ſhips and men, with the number of land forces neceſſary, they could very readily eſtimate, as alſo the number of years the war might probably laſt; and though none of theſe were by any means certain, yet as the exertions of Britain muſt be proportioned to thoſe of France, Spain, and Holland, they could come at a tolerable gueſs; and, in my humble opinion, it will coſt Britain more than 120 millions. I ſhould rather ſuppoſe 160 for this reaſon: the great diſtance will both prolong the duration of the war, and increaſe

creaſe the expence. I do not believe the war will laſt leſs than ſeven years; and I am convinced, that except the firſt year, it will coſt above 20 millions annually. The reſources in India will be locked up, in the firſt inſtance; and from England muſt all the money neceſſary be drained. Money goes a little way in India; I mean according to its nominal value. Beſides, there muſt be at leaſt 40,000 ſeamen employed at home. The Indian nations will certainly join France and Spain againſt Britain, and will leſſen their expence conſiderably. Beſides, the national debt of France is not near ſo great as that of England, its real reſources are greater, and the annuities falling in will enable them to bear a freſh burthen.

JOSEPH. I cannot agree with you in opinion, that the reſources of France are greater than thoſe of England. France has not always made good her payments; but England always has, which is to me a proof of her more ſolid riches.

BENJAMIN. Without prejudice againſt England, for I like it better than France, I think quite otherwiſe. A man who walks on a precipice is more circumſpect and cautious, than one who treads on level ground. It is an abſolute certainty, that thoſe who in private life carry on buſineſs that is *ſupported by credit*, are far more careful of it than thoſe who can at any time pay all that they owe. A man of real fortune may uſe freedom with his credit, and with his creditors;

tors; but every man who holds up a *falſe credit* pays with the punctuality of a royal bank till the laſt moment, and then all is over.

JOSEPH. I am convinced. You need not ſay any more to make me ſee clearly that I judged of wealth by a falſe barometer. I always conſidered, that punctuality in payments was a ſign of wealth; whereas I now perceive, that it is more neceſſary to thoſe who are not rich, than to thoſe who are. Had I been a man of buſineſs, I might perhaps have known this before; and I am more than ever of opinion, that to be well acquainted with mankind is of benefit to a King.

BENJAMIN. I perceive, Sir, *that* opinion is too deeply impreſſed on

your mind to be altered; neither do I wiſh to do it, as you never can have it in your power to practiſe what you approve of ſo much in theory: for it is not in your power, by an intimate intercourſe to make yourſelf practically acquainted with mankind.

JOSEPH. Are you then of opinion, Sir, that Britain may be ruined by her debts?

BENJAMIN. *Certainly I am.* I do not indeed pretend to know when, but if ſhe continues to contract more and more in the manner ſhe has done, there can be no doubt of it; yet, till the laſt day, ſhe will pay with the ſame punctuality ſhe did the firſt; and why will ſhe do ſo?—becauſe the day

day that ſhe ceaſes to do it will be the laſt.

JOSEPH. Well then; but the nation is not to be ruined becauſe the debts are not paid. I ſhould rather think it will be better, and that trade will get to a more flouriſhing ſtate than ever, after this momentary convulſion.

BENJAMIN. If it is not deſtroyed by the long preſſure of heavy taxes before that bankruptcy comes, it may be perhaps, as you ſay; for my part I cannot form any notion of the circumſtances that will accompany a phenomenon that will be ſo entirely new in the world, but I ſhould think it would probably be attended with a revolution in the government, and a

total change in the manners of the people; for they are in a ſtrange ſort of ſtate. Every year there goes twice as much money to pay the intereſt of debt, as all the current expences of the government. The ſtockholders, who live idle in England, have a greater revenue paid to them from the State, for the loans of money that is all ſpent, than the revenues of *all the Ruſſias and of the Grand Seignior, added into one ſum.*

JOSEPH. Were ſuch an excreſcence in my dominions, rather than admit ſuch an immenſe burden on induſtry, and riſk a revolution in government, I ſhould order a reduction to be made in the intereſt; in doing which, I ſhould not more effectually ſerve the country at large, than thoſe mi-

ſerable perſons who have lent their money on national ſecurity, and who muſt one day be reduced to want, at leaſt whoſe heirs muſt. In ſhort I am of opinion that gradual periodical reductions which might give the people who have ſtock, time to acquire money other ways, and to withdraw gradually, would be a ſervice alike great to the ſtate itſelf, and to its creditors.

BENJAMIN. There is certainly much good reaſon in what you ſay, but it is impracticable. The ſtate is poſſeſſed of no power by which it could be done, nor would the people agree to it; for it would be impoſſible to convince them of the expediency, becauſe every individual ſtockholder who conſiders *that he may ſell out*

when he pleaſes, only feels as an individual, not as a part of a whole, which muſt one day be ruined. There is another reaſon that is ſtill more forcible than all the others; that future credit would not be to be had, and the ſtate could never after make a ſingle loan.

JOSEPH. I perceive it would not do, and I am much ſurpriſed that ſo well informed a nation perſeveres in ſo pernicious a ſyſtem. Perpetual loans for temporary purpoſes, and that without limitation too, it is infinity compared to a grain of ſand!!

BENJAMIN. Your compariſon Sir, is certainly very juſt, but there is no ſaying into what errors men will run when they have once adopted a wrong ſyſtem

ſyſtem. Time has a different ſort of action upon nations, from that which it has upon individuals. All the men in England united in one body, can at the moſt have a recollection of the national debt for 50 years, and the clamour then was as great againſt the debt as it is now. It is even become more familiar now, and the ſame terror acting on men's minds, daily loſes its effect; and as for the mathematical truth, that motion overtakes reſt they give themſelves no ſort of trouble about that. They reaſon like the inhabitants of a ſmall town, where the church-ſpire threatened to fall to one ſide. When it was perceived at firſt, the people were alarmed and afraid: it continued to lean a little, and a little more, for near half a century; but long before that

that time they had become quite incredulous, and when any ſtranger obſerved that the ſteeple would fall, "No "no" would be the anſwer, "the "ſteeple was like to fall when I was "a boy, and it is yet ſtanding, you "need be under no uneaſineſs about "the ſteeple." It is needleſs, I ſuppoſe to add, that it did fall at laſt, after thoſe concerned had reaſoned themſelves into a belief that it was to ſtand almoſt for ever; and although every day that was added to its duration, added alſo to the certainty of its approaching fall; and I deem this the caſe with the national debt; for though every increaſe adds to the certainty of its deſtruction, it rather adds to the confidence of the people, who will ſome day find out their miſtake.

JOSEPH.

JOSEPH. Should France actually ſucceed in thoſe plans, do you imagine it would humble the pride and deſtroy the wealth of England?

BENJAMIN. I am of opinion it would in time do both, but unleſs the ſpirits and diſpoſition of individuals is changed, and the national character deſtroyed, it will riſe again, perhaps, not to its preſent ſtate of importance or proſperity, but to a conſiderable degree of both.

JOSEPH. Do you imagine, ſuppoſing France ſhould ſucceed in raiſing herſelf to great power, and humbling England, that the liberties of other nations in Europe would be in much danger.

BENJAMIN. I ſhould think that the deſigns of France will awaken other powers to reſiſt them, long before they can ſucceed: other nations muſt perceive the neceſſity of preſerving the balance of power in Europe, either by ſupporting the preſent ſyſtem, or giving riſe to another. Univerſal monarchy, though a diſtant proſpect, certainly is a favourite object with France; but while they follow it with great eagerneſs and perſeverance, and it muſt alſo be allowed, with great ability, they ſeem to me to overlook, a change which has taken place in the minds of men, and which convinces me they have little chance to ſucceed.

When the greater portion of the European world was immerſed in ignorance

ignorance and barbarity, and when the diviſions of nations had not been accurately defined, the dominions of Kings, like the property of individuals, was liable to a diminution or increaſe from every ſudden guſt of fortune. Poſſeſſion generally was accompained with an acknowledged right to govern, which the inhabitants ſeldom wiſhed or dared to diſpute. The nations of Gaul were eaſily welded into one, and the Turkiſh Empire has united under its creſcent, the dominions of many Kings; but wherever letters have carried civilization, that has *not* been the caſe. The moſt poliſhed ſpots have ever been the moſt accurately divided, and the people moſt tenacious of their boundaries. Ancient Greece maintained independance in various

various forms in a number of ſtates. The Phœnecians alſo, when they planted the arts in Italy, aſſigned a variety of names, characters, and boundaries to the different ſtates.—The unique ſtory of the Roman Empire ſwallowing them all up one after another, and making poliſhed nations and barbarians equally ſubmit, is not an objection to this theory. It is ſufficient to eſtabliſh my opinion, that we have always found, where men were moſt civilized, they have been moſt tenacious of their boundaries. When the Roman Empire was broken in pieces like a potter's veſſel, it was divided in a new manner, but the diviſions which were but at firſt ideal lines, are now made ſacred by their antiquity. As a more recent inſtance of this, we may

may look at the conqueſts of Spain, which with eaſe were extended over the nations of other climes, and which ſtill preſerves poſſeſſions which well nigh encircle the globe, as with a girdle; while the importance which Spainderived in Europe under Charles V. and his ſucceſſors the Philips, was but of ſhort duration. Even the Portugueſe wreſted from them, the dominion over *their* country, although nature ſeemed to have pointed out, that from its geographical ſituation, Portugal ſhould be joined to the Kingdom of Spain. This idea is very ſtrongly impreſſed on my mind, and I really am inclined to think that France never can ſucceed in adding other dominions in Europe to her own, though ſhe certainly may, by the

the policy which ſhe purſues, exalt herſelf to the depreſſion and injury of many.

JOSEPH. Do you mean to ſay, that the ſubdiviſions of ſtates and empires, is a proof of civilization? Britain but lately ſaw two Kings at once within its limits, and has anciently ſeen many more. France was originally divided into different Kingdoms, ſo was Spain, and ſo was Ruſſia, but they certainly were not more civilized than they are now.

BENJAMIN. But here there is a diſtinction to be made. I did not mean to ſay that *ſmall* dominion implied civilization, but that civilization cauſed a *ſtrong attachment to ancient boundaries.* I think there is a wide diſtinction between thoſe diviſions which family broils

broils have occaſioned; and diviſions which have fairly been made, with the conſent of mankind, and which are ſtrengethened by a difference of language and of manners. France and Spain were, ever ſince there have been any hiſtorical records, filled with people who ſpoke different languages, who were different in their manners, and different in their national character. The Gauls and Germans were again divided from each other by the ſame ſort of diſtinction. But the interior diviſions, both of the Gauls and Germans, had no ſuch cauſes of diſunion, and though they ſometimes erected their ſtandards againſt each other, they aſſembled under one common ſtandard againſt a ſtrange foe. Thus while in matters of war, whether offenſive or defenſive, they were but one,

one, as regulators of police, in times of peace, they were many nations: a diviſion which in my mind is not at all an improper or injudicious one, particularly in rude times, when the orders of a King cannot be enforced at a diſtance, with any great degree of certainty of ſtrictneſs, or of juſtice. Theſe ſmall ſtates were very different from thoſe of ancient Greece; each of which was as complete in its nature, as the moſt extenſive and well governed kingdom in the world.

JOSEPH. I am inclined to be of your opinion, I do not believe that even if France could get poſſeſſion of Switzerland it would be able to keep it with any degree of advantage to itſelf, and if ſo it is very unlikely that

that it would be able to maintain more extenſive or more remote conqueſts. I perceive we have much, however, to fear from the ambition of France, and it muſt be carefully watched. I ſhall avail myſelf of their example, but with a very different view. I ſhall have *defence*, and not *offence* for my object, and I ſhall have the different nations of Europe with their et cæteras entered into a Sanctum Sanctorum in the French ſtyle, for I muſt own I give them much credit for that, if the end were as juſt as the means is wiſe, Joſeph would give it his moſt hearty approbation. Let us now for a little time leave the affairs of Europe, and conſider thoſe of America. I have a great curioſity to be informed of the internal ſtate of that country, and what

what Government is moſt likely to be eſtabliſhed there at laſt.

BENJAMIN. I think it is as yet quite impoſſible to ſay, but it will probably end in a mixed Government, ſomething on the model of the Britiſh. The fact however, at preſent is, that people are too much diſperſed, and too poor to afford to be governed properly in any way. Until men are brought within certain diſtances of each other, and untill they have acquired conſiderable property, they muſt from neceſſity be pretty free. Men are like the particles of water, which when ſeparated by the effects of fire, till they are diſtant from each other, become quite elaſtic and repulſive, under the form of ſteam, though under that of water, they

are attractive. I am inclined to believe, that in a future time America will be divided into ſeveral parts, which may perhaps aſſume different forms of government; but it will, at all events, be many years before any good and effective government can be eſtabliſhed.

JOSEPH. The Americans, by following after other nations, may profit by their experience, and avoid their errors. Europe is a blotted original, incumbered with the miſtakes of many centuries of ignorance and ſuperſtition. America may be, and I think will be, a fair copy, free from all thoſe incumbrances from which, I am afraid, our ancient world never will be cleared. I think, that of all the opportunities which have occur-

red ſince the world began, for forming an excellent ſyſtem of government, this is the beſt.

BENJAMIN. If the minds of the people were as open to truth, as the fields of the country are ready for cultivation, it might be as you ſay: but they are not ſo. Your ſubjects, the Germans, tenacious as they are of cuſtoms, are more eaſy to reform than the Americans. Your people have, at leaſt, learnt the habit of obedience, which will overcome prejudice; but to a lawleſs and ungovernable diſpoſition, the Americans add prejudices peculiar to themſelves; and if there were a man who could benefit his country by a good code of laws, the Americans would not adopt them. Thus the affair would end in nothing at

at laſt, though it muſt be granted, and I will readily allow, that the experience and the miſtake of others ought to teach them, and might enable them to avoid many of thoſe miſtakes, into which mankind could not avoid falling, until experience had learned them better.

The Europeans had no examples from which they could profit much; for the manners of the ancients were ſo different from thoſe aſſumed by the Moderns, ſince the fifteenth century, that very little could be got by drawing a compariſon between the politics and manners of the Ancients, and thoſe of modern times. I have always thought that it was a very great miſtake, and it certainly is a pretty general one, to extol the learning

and arts of the Ancients, above thoſe of the preſent day, tho' as far as I can perceive, they lived in a manner that we ſhould term ſavage and uncivilized, and followed practices which were equally oppoſite to common ſenſe, and to true refinement of manners. In the days of Roman virtue, ſome of the greateſt men of Rome eat at the ſame table, and even out of the ſame diſh, with their ſlaves; and again, in the days of their luxury and magnificence, they cut their ſlaves into pieces to feed lampreys for their tables. The manners that admitted of either of theſe muſt have been very rude indeed. When Cato the Elder eat out of the diſh with his ſlaves, he muſt have been ſatisfied with their company and converſation. Now I conſider it as one of the ſtrongeſt and moſt certain

marks of a cultivated and poliſhed mind to ſelect its company carefully. I do not ſay, that ſevere and rigid virtue requires that nice choice, nay, I am ſure it does not; but that refinement of mind does, I am certain. It is from circumſtances of this ſort that I would judge of the Ancients rather than from the more direct teſtimony even of the beſt Hiſtorians. When Hiſtorians relate direct facts, concluſions may be drawn with ſome degree of certainty; but when they begin to favour us with deſcription, I muſt confeſs I read with ſome degree of miſtruſt, not of their truth, but of my own capacity of underſtanding them properly. Words ſuggeſt ideas not always like thoſe which were intended, and which were in the mind of the writer, but thoſe

that are the moſt familiar to the mind of the perſon who hears or who reads. I am very diffident of my judgment in any caſe reſpecting the Ancients, and I differ very much from moſt people on this ſubject; for it is impoſſible to avoid forming ſome opinion, whether right or wrong. Of the Romans my opinion is, that, except the grand national character of valour, they had but few virtues of which they could boaſt. Their principles were thoſe of well-regulated robbers: their policy was excellent; and their government (for men who were to live by the ſword) was, during the times of the Republic, the beſt in the world. With regard to the fine arts, they ſeem to have flouriſhed only for a very ſhort period. They came in with that luxury

ury which overturned the Republic, and were expelled by that debauchery and idleneſs that followed. In their virtuous days, a victorious General was accuſed of ſtudying Grecian literature—a ſtudy which they then deſpiſed, as effeminate and unworthy of a Roman; and in a ſhort time after the Auguſtan age, they were obliged to cut the heads from Grecian ſtatues to ornament thoſe rude trunks which they had carved in honour of an Emperor, as there was not a ſtatuary in Rome who could form a good head! With ſtrong, manly minds, the Romans ſeem to have poſeſſed a few excellent principles. They civilized the nations while they ſubdued them; and in exchange for the liberty of which they deprived the reſt of mankind, they taught them

the art of making bricks, and other ufeful inventions, which laid the foundation of the grandeur of Europe at this day.

JOSEPH. Well, but their eloquence —the hiſtories which remain, the inimitable poems of Virgil, and other fine productions, will always make us look upon the Romans as men who excelled in other arts than thoſe of war and government.

BENJAMIN. They certainly will do ſo; but I am not ſure if it will be with great juſtice. The tranſactions of the great men at Rome were the moſt important that ever attracted the attention, or called forth the abilities of men. As eloquence and war, or in other words the army and the bar

bar were the only ladders of ambition in the richeſt nation of the world, and among the moſt ambitious men that ever lived, ſoldiers and orators not only had ſtrong incitements to make great exertions, but they had the beſt theatre that ever was; I mean, the moſt conſpicuous, and the moſt important.

Wherever public buſineſs has been managed by public ſpeaking, there have been great orators. For among mankind there are numbers of natural orators, and many more who are qualified to excel when their powers are directed to that line. Auguſtus was a good orator from his firſt attempts, at a very early age. Julius Cæſar, who had the firſt degree of abilities in every line, was a great orator;

orator; in the practice of which he had a great advantage over moſt other men, from his intimate acquaintance with men and things, united to elegance of manners and a bold mind, which intitled him to enſlave his country, if there is ſuch a thing as abilities giving one man a right to rule another. The number of Roman orators was not very great, when we conſider the ample field; and their fame certainly is, in ſome degree, owing to the importance of the affairs in which they were concerned. Mankind ever have been, and ever will be, deceived in their judgment by the importance and brilliancy of a tranſaction. Your neighbour, the famous Frederic of Pruſſia, would have found it very difficult to perſuade mankind of his greatneſs, or to vindicate his unfair

attack

attack upon Queen Maria Tereſa, had he only been a tartar chief, carrying on his ravages againſt his rude neighbours, with exactly the ſame wiſdom, the ſame juſtice, and the ſame degree of humanity, that he in that caſe did. In ſhort, the world will always admire the ſplendid and brilliant tranſactions of men, more than thoſe that are leſs magnificent, more wiſe and more juſt..—Could the orators at a Poliſh Diet ſpeak like Demoſthenes or Cicero, they would find ſtill that *Fame* was beyond their reach; and their orations would ſhare in the inſignificance of the ſubject.

Joseph. But the poetic and proſe compoſitions of the Romans, were admirable, and in my opinion, have not

not been equalled by the Moderns. Theſe will always prove their title to the firſt rank, as a poliſhed, or at leaſt as an elegant nation.

BENJAMIN. I am willing to admit the excellence of the individuals as poets and hiſtorians; I only do not think that as they were few in number, and as the time during which the flouriſhed was but ſhort, the Roman character is at all marked by that partial and temporary degree of excellence.

JOSEPH. Do you then entertain a high idea of the progreſs that the Ancients had made in ſcience? I am afraid that there, they were ſtill farther behind.

BENJAMIN.

BENJAMIN. Certainly they were both in uſeful and ſpeculative ſcience; in moral philoſophy they were great adepts, but in every branch of natural philoſophy, they were as mere children. Thoſe who practiſed very ſeldom reaſoned; and thoſe who did reaſon, took fanciful ideas for their guide, in place of facts and experiments; ſo that knowledge ſcarcely advanced at all. However much the compariſon may be for or againſt the Ancients, it muſt be allowed that they were exceedingly unlike the Moderns. There is a diviſion to be made both in knowledge and in accompliſhment. There are many ſorts of knowledge and acquirements that are natural to men, and of which, except indeed, in the very rudeſt ſtates of ſociety, men are never found entirely

entirely diveſted. Even ſome arts which are the moſt difficult, are of this ſort, while others of far inferior merit are not to be found except in poliſhed ſociety, and not always even there. Poetry, painting, muſic, war, politics, law, and many branches of moral philoſophy, are natural to men: ſavage nations underſtand them all, more or leſs; and if I may be permitted to expreſs myſelf ſo, they ſeem to compoſe the *original element of mind*, and may be poſſeſſed in a very high degree by men who are in other reſpects but in a very rude ſtate.—Thoſe branches of knowledge again, which require experiment and time, with an *accumulation* of facts, obſervations and trials to produce, are ſeldom in any degree of forwardneſs, except in civilized ſociety; indeed men

men do not *naturally* make any conſiderable degree of progreſs in any of theſe ſorts of knowledge. The Ancients were poliſhed, and very highly ſo, as far as regarded theſe branches of natural knowledge, ſuch as individual genius creates; but the Moderns, in addition to that knowledge, have got the other that is acquired by the repeated efforts of reaſon and of art.

The diſcoveries in mechanics, in chemiſtry, in navigation, in all branches of natural philoſophy, but above all the art of printing, which has facilitated ſo much, or as it were made a poſt-road for the communication of ideas; operating together have totally changed the face of affairs, and made this world quite different from that with which we

eternally making compariſons. When I read Homer's deſcription of the lovers of Penelope, an accompliſhed Queen.—When I read of their killing, ſkinning, dreſſing, and eating ſheep and oxen, I cannot help thinking of the Indian Savages, in the back ſettlements of North America. The entertainments of the moſt luxurious Romans, who had fighting ſlaves killing each other during their meals, neither fills me with an idea of their humanity, the civilization of their manners, or the poliſh of their minds.—When again I read the grand deſcriptions of gold, ſilver, purple, gems, and coſtly furniture, I form to myſelf the idea of the grandeur and dreſſes at a *ſtage play, performed at a country village by ſtrolling actors*; and when it is conſidered that

that the polite, the elegant, and I had almoſt ſaid the omnipotent Auguſtus, had neither a ſhirt to his back, nor glaſs to his windows, I am perſwaded that I do not form too unfavourable an opinion of the taſte that reigned in their magnificence.

JOSEPH. I muſt own that it never occurred to me that language does not give juſt ideas, although the words may be literally and exactly true.—Unleſs the man who ſpeaks, and the man who hears, affix the ſame idea to the ſame word, language does not anſwer the purpoſe, and though the Ancients, when they ſpoke of gold, ſcarlet, and diamonds, meant the ſame ſubſtances and the ſame colour that we mean; yet the workmanſhip

workmanſhip and other circumſtances might differ as much as the dreſs of a common ſoldier does from that of a General officer. We naturally, it is certain, when we read of theſe fine dreſſes, and of crowns, and ſceptres, affix ideas ſimilar to that of the crowns and ſcepters, and dreſſes which we have ſeen; though upon reflecting on the matter, they probably were very much inferior. The bluſtering, boaſting, and blaſpheming heroes, who ſat ten years before Troy, are much indebted to Homer for his elegant deſcriptions of them; but I am afraid they alſo owe a good deal to this circumſtance which you have now mentioned, of the miſtaken ideas that ariſe from the imperfection of language in communicating ideas.

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BENJAMIN. Until reflection had ſuggeſted to my mind, the circumſtance of which we now ſpeak, I formed grand ideas of the Ancients; and that other people do the ſame, I conclude from the painting which I have ſeen made, of the Grecian tents, &c. &c. than which Regal Thrones are not more elegant nor ſuperb. Their chariots too are painted patterns of taſte and of elegance, when in reality thoſe heroes who lived ten years, partly in boats, and partly in tents, who quarreled with each other, and abuſed their enemies in a ſtyle that would better befit a retailer of fiſh, than a leader of an army, who fought with ſpears headed with iron, and occaſionally with large ſtones, and who rode in chariots, boaſting and vaunting as they went

went along, notwithſtanding all Homer's fine deſcriptions, I cannot help thinking, were a ſorry group.* —I was at firſt led away with Homer's ſublime deſcriptions. A hero I did conſider as bold, honourable, and generous; a chariot of a hero I conceived to be an elegant car, drawn by ſpirited horſes; and as for the Gods, they were *but* an auxili-

* The amazing power of Homer in the ſublime, is not more to be admired from any thing, than his deſcriptions of ſingle combat, in which the heaving of a huge ſtone (the moſt outrè of all poſſible actions in the midſt of a Fight between two heroes) is painted in ſuch a manner as to fill us with great ideas of the warriors. At the ſame time, it certainly gives a ſtrange notion of the manner in which they fought, when a ſtone could do the buſineſs, and that a large one too, which muſt be a very uncouth weapon; and while heaving up, muſt have left a fine opportunity for the foe to make an attack.

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aries. Upon better conſideration, at leaſt upon a longer conſideration, I ſee the heroes were rude in manners, and uncultivated in mind. Their chariots were more like thoſe of a common carrier, than the noble vehicles of which poets write, and painters make pictures. Perhaps Homer painted the manners of theſe times from his own ideas of what they really were: or perhaps he had no intention but that which moſt poets have of making a fine poem. Fiction and poetry ever have been, and ever will be, intimately connected, and epic poetry in particular; for unleſs the minute parts are filled up, it will not make a complete piece, and the minute parts muſt, from the neceſſity of things be imagined.—A tradition affords ground for a poem, which as a finiſhed

a finiſhed piece, muſt delineate accurately, whatever is treated upon at all. Homer, Virgil, and Milton, I believe were equally aiming at truth, the firſt as much as the laſt, and the laſt as much as the firſt.

In ſhort I believe that with regard to the manners of the Ancients, we are and ever ſhall remain under great miſtakes; but that we probably are neareſt the truth when we ſuppoſe them to have been very rude.

JOSEPH. The improvements and progreſs in diſcovery that mankind have made during the laſt hundred years muſt have ariſen from ſome great change in the minds of men, for I believe no period of an equal length of time can boaſt of one half

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of the improvement and diſcoveries in the uſeful arts.

BENJAMIN. Ever ſince mankind took experiment for their guide in the road to knowledge, it has advanced with great rapidity.—The Ancients made diſcoveries by accident, and without ſeeking for them, as the precious metals were firſt picked up by chance, but we now dig for them, and for the acquiſition of knowledge we eſtabliſh experiment. This I think, explains the rapid progreſs we make in diſcovery.

JOSEPH. There is one circumſtance that relates to the Ancients, at which I have often been ſurprized, and which I think indeed, makes it very uſeleſs, to compare them with the

the Moderns. Nine tenths of the people were ſlaves, and three thouſand of theſe wretches would ſometimes be the property of one rich man, would follow him as part of his retinue on the road; would labour for him in the mechanical arts as journeymen: in ſhort, they would do whatever a maſter had a right to demand of a ſlave. The freed men, were little other than the dependants of the great, and the diſtributions of corn prove that they were very poor. None of that equal diviſion of property took place there, that is ſeen in Vienna or London, where the inhabitants would not accept of a beggarly diſtribution of corn. That political equality which we already ſee carried ſo far in ſome parts and which is every day extending

tending farther, is quite a new phenomenon in the world.

BENJAMIN. Certainly it is; and what is it that has levelled men ſo much, but thoſe inventions of printing, &c. &c. which have put the minds of men more nearly upon an equality. I alſo attribute the changes among mankind, partly to the uſe of figures and calculations, applied to politics and the common affairs of life, for until that was done, the regulations as well as the judgments of men, were very limited and imperfect; they could neither lay extenſive plans, nor with any certainty draw proper concluſions until arithmetic was practiſed and applied to the uſeful arts. This certainly diſtinguiſhes the preſent time from

thoſe that are paſt, and it is a matter of no ſmall curioſity, that men could with great accuracy calculate eclipſes and the motions of the ſtars, while they could not employ figures, by ſimple rules of multiplication and diviſion, to politics or private life, a thing, than which, nothing certainly is more obvious, and few more eaſy. Without going in that manner to work, men were liable to great error, tho' by dint of a clear underſtanding, and great experience, a few individuals were indeed, capable of underſtanding a *little* of the views and intereſts of nations, but to all except theſe few, they were totally unknown. While by means of printing, and thoſe other inventions, we have greatly increaſed the facility of ſpreading knowledge among men: we have alſo imbibed many

many prejudices, and according to the modern ſyſtem, genius is cramped while it is cultivated. The human mind, by having inſtruction poured in upon it faſter than it is ready for its reception, acquires a negative ſort of abilities, and frequently ceaſes either to have a power or deſire of thinking for itſelf.—Though there are vaſt numbers of men maintained in the world for little other purpoſe than that of increaſing the general ſtock of knowledge; yet that ſtock does not owe much of its increaſe to their labours, but more to the labour of thoſe whoſe ſituations in life have obliged them to think and act for themſelves. The learned body of mankind are employed in looking back upon what is paſt and gone for ever, rather than in looking

forward that they may increaſe the knowledge and happineſs of thoſe who are yet to come. Theſe men do not ſeem to conſider, that a man who knows all the languages in the world, with the hiſtories of all ages, and of every nation, unleſs he employs that knowledge for the benefit and happineſs of mankind, reads and ſtudies juſt to as little purpoſe, as the man who would ſpend his life in pouring water from one bottle into another, and then back again; when the end comes there is no trace left of the labours of either, and no effect produced. I own, that without this very ſpecies of learning, of which I now ſpeak, we ſhould find a great want, but that it is abuſed, I am certain. I have ſpent a great portion of my life in endeavouring

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to root out prejudices that hurt mankind, and I am ſorry to ſay that I believe the prejudices of the learned, are more deeply rooted than thoſe of any other ſet of men.—As for me, a learned man would deſpiſe any thing that I could ſay on this ſubject, and if it were poſſible for this converſation ever to make its way into print, I ſhould have the contempt of at leaſt half the learned world; but I ſhould have the comfort of being able to tell them with truth, that neither the firſt productions of literary genius, nor the moſt uſeful diſcoveries in ſcience, are owing to that body of learned men, who devote their time and ſtudy to the language and hiſtory of the Ancients. Were I an Emperor, or were I to preſume to adviſe an Emperor, it would be, not to diſcour-

age ancient learning, but not to allow it to tyrranize over ſcience as it has done, and to give ſome ſhare of that importance to thoſe who follow modern ſtudies, which has hitherto been, and yet is confined to thoſe who direct their ſtudies to claſſical learning.

JOSEPH. I am glad to find your ideas on this ſubject correſpond ſo exactly with mine; I only wanted to be aſcertained of the juſtice of my own notions on the ſubject to put them in practice. I ſhall order prizes for eſſays, on moral and natural philoſophy, and ſhall have profeſſors of the firſt abilities for mathematics, mechanics, chemiſtry, &c. &c. but that ſhall not be all; I ſhall think of ſome means of beſtowing honour upon

upon thoſe who ſtand foremoſt in theſe uſeful ſciences, nor ſhall revenues be wanting to ſupport thoſe whoſe exertions tend ſo much to the eaſe and happineſs of mankind.

BENJAMIN. But let me intreat you not to uſe thoſe violent means which you have ſometimes practiced. I hope nothing will be done to diſcourage in the ſmalleſt degree, thoſe ſtudies that are purely claſſical. When you encourage another ſort of learning, do not diſcourage that, leaſt it in time be forſaken. All that ought to be wiſhed for, is, that it ſhould not hold the firſt place, where it ought only to be upon an equality or perhaps only to fill the ſecond.

JOSEPH. We agree perfectly in this, and for the future, as I have this day got an uſeful leſſon from your greater experience, when I am in any doubt I ſhall rather leave ſomething undone, than rūn the riſque of doing too much.

BENJAMIN. It is the ſafeſt way, and I think the beſt; It is a plan, which if you follow with your love for the intereſt of mankind, you will obtain the name of *Great* more deſervedly and more certainly, than by any conqueſts. Already, indeed, is the world inclined to give to you almoſt as much praiſe as is ever granted to virtue, or to a man who does not cut the throats of half a million of his fellow men. It is no leſs a cauſe of wonder, than of regret, that

that the moſt brilliant fame attends bad actions, and that warlike heroes have always been honoured with the firſt place in fame's temple.

JOSEPH. There is not, I muſt confeſs, any thing that gives me ſo bad an opinion of mankind as that fact; and they have ſuffered moſt ſeverly for it, for while men admire ambitious warriors, who ſpread deſtruction and death more than thoſe Kings who aim at extending their happineſs, the moſt ambitious men will always take that fatal road to glory.

The name of Julius Cæſar I think, has more admirers then that of Titus; and indeed were it for nothing elſe, the romantic and aſtoniſhing victories of

the former muſt make a deeper impreſſion on the mind than the mild, but leſs remarkable virtues of the latter. Do you know Sir, that I have maintained a conſtant ſtruggle in my own breaſt on this very ſubject? Early in my life, my mother, the unfortunate Maria Tereſa was ſubjected to the impetuous attack of that ambitious, but unprincipled King Frederic of Pruſſia. This example, aided by the virtuous principles which were early inſtilled into me, have hitherto made me ſeek fame only in the good of my ſubjects, but I have a thouſand times been tempted to break forth as the depredator inſtead of the friend of mankind; for though brought up with principles of virtue, the ſeeds of ambition were ſown deep in my mind. Am-

bition is one of thoſe paſſions that grows ſtronger, while thoſe that counteract it are not much ſtrengthened by obſervations on mankind.

BENJAMIN. I cannot deny the certain fact, that a more brilliant fame is acquired by the honours of a proſperous war, than by the virtues of peace; but then in the one caſe nothing is riſqued.

That portion of fame which may be acquired by virtue is certain, whereas the warrior ſtakes honour and fame, and every thing that is valuable, and riſques meeting with contempt and diſgrace: add to this, that in the one caſe there is ſelf approbation, in the other, there often is the moſt bitter remorſe, and even deſpair.—believe me Sir, that

your road to fame is far the beſt; it is the moſt certain and the moſt honourable, and although it may not be ſo brilliant, it it to be conſidered, that a virtuous King, acquires fame among the good and the virtuous, while the tribute of applauſe and aſtoniſhment that follows the deſtroyer, is extorted by involuntary feelings from the weak or the wicked.

JOSEPH. I ſhould abhor myſelf if I did not think as you do in this caſe. I only lament that the caſe is ſo unfortunate for mankind, that the ſeemingly moſt eaſy road to fame is through blood and carnage, and muſt therefore, as I before ſaid, always tempt the daring and ambitious to deſtroy the peace of mankind.

I ſhall

I ſhall conſider myſelf as a fortunate man, if the ambition of my neighbours does not ſome day force me to gratify my own. I am afraid the obſtinacy of my neighbours, the Dutch, will prevent them from agreeing to ſome demands I have to make upon them, in which caſe we ſhall have fame or diſgrace enough on one ſide or the other.

BENJAMIN. I hope that will not be the caſe. The Dutch, believe me, are in no condition to fight, neither are they at preſent much inclined to it; but if they were, it is not in Holland that the laurels of the warrior are to be plucked. Were I Emperor of Germany, and wanted to gain fame by means of war, I ſhould certainly turn my arms againſt the

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Grand Signior. The ſtory would read well in all the Gazettes of Europe, as well as in future hiſtory. The Turk would ſend a vaſt number of ignorant infidels (as we call them) into the field, and you might probably have the glory of putting to flight, an hundred thouſand men with turbans on their heads.—Now it would be impoſſible to do ſuch a thing with the Dutch, as they never fight in ſuch great numbers, and are not much inclined to run. As long marches, great numbers of men, bloody battles and attacks upon armies that are much larger than your own, are what acquire fame, you might have ſome in this caſe. How fine it would be, to read that the Emperor Joſeph, with an army of forty-five thouſand men, put to

flight

flight one hundred and twenty thouſand turks! That the Creſcent of Mahomet was completely ſtained with the blood of infidels, and trampled under the feet of a Chriſtain army. By theſe means you might get fame more eaſily than by fighting with the Dutch, who with an army inferior in numbers to your own, might perhaps gain a victory; but who would, at all events, make you purchaſe glory very dear, even if futurity would allow that there was any glory in the Emperor of Germany, who had been at peace during ſo long a period, fighting with, and conquering a nation ſo far inferior in numbers and in ſtrength, juſt after they had been ſupporting an expenſive war by ſea, with the Engliſh nation.

JOSEPH.

JOSEPH. I hope it never will be my lot either to humble the Creſcent of Mahomet, or of the flag of Holland, though neither of the two is impoſſible.—My ambition is to have it recorded how many towns I have built and beautified, how I improved the ſoil, and encouraged the manufactures of my country; how I made my people happy at home, and reſpected abroad. This, I hope, will procure me the eſteem of the wiſe and good; as for that portion of mankind, who value not virtue and goodneſs, I care not for their admiration, nor ſhall I labour to obtain their applauſe.

BENJAMIN. Why, it is not worthy of the good or the great, to court the applauſe

applauſe or claps of a multitude that is not regulated by wiſdom or virtue.

JOSEPH. I have an intention of prohibiting ſome articles of luxury, that are imported into my dominions from England, and I wiſh to know your opinion of it. My reaſons are, firſt, there is a great balance of trade againſt Germany, and in favour of England; and next, as none of the articles we import from thence, are ſuch as we *cannot* make, I wiſh to encourage my ſubjects to work as they do in England, and ſo to ſupply themſelves.

BENJAMIN. The reaſons are very good certainly at a firſt look, and may perhaps, be founded on very ſolid and wiſe

wiſe conſideration; but no country in Europe can excell in every manufacture, and therefore it is for its advantage to purchaſe from thoſe that do.

The diviſion of labour among nations, is a good thing, and ought not to be diſcouraged altogether; becauſe if you diſcourage that, you will never attain to the higheſt degree of excellence in any thing. It is only another ſtage of the diviſion of labour among individuals, which is certainly the cauſe of our preſent wealth, for without diviſion of labour, there can be little wealth, for there is no wealth but what is produced by the labour of man; none whatever, and the wealth of any country is the aggregate of the labour of all the hands

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in the country; which is meaſured by the excellence, the dexterity, and the induſtry in the different branches. Now as the excellence and dexterity cannot exiſt without diviſion of labour, it may be ſaid to be the cauſe of wealth. Although it may be ſaid that Germany is ſufficiently large to admit of all the arts flouriſhing in full perfection in itſelf. I do not think it is; there are certain manufactures which ſuit certain people, as much as particular plants or grounds do particular ſorts of ſoil; and unleſs you had all the varieties of men, that are to be found in the world, you could not have all the varieties of manufactures in perfection. The hard-ware manufactures, I know, are what you chiefly wiſh to bring to perfection in your dominions,

ons, by excluding thoſe of England, but it will not do. The activity and verſatility that is required, by the manufacturers of hard-wares, will prevent the Germans from ſucceſs: their habits of life, their conſtitutions, and their minds, are all againſt that ſpecies of exertion. Inſtead, therefore of excluding Britiſh manufactures, I would adviſe you to admit them on condition of geting an equal admittance for your manufactures into Britain; this ſeems to me, to be better than prohibitions, and it is the more neceſſary, as the French want to have Commercial connection with England.

JOSEPH. But I do not ſee the great harm there would be in that connection; it would not hurt the Germans,

Germans, nor indeed any nation. why not let France and England buy and ſell together if they pleaſe?

BENJAMIN. I muſt own I view this matter very differently: I think if France, which is ſo near England, can get a friendly Commerce, that the habits and the arts of England will be their principle export, and if they ſhould ſettle in France, I beg to know whether ſhe would not ſoon become the greateſt nation in the world?—neither conqueſt nor commerce ever accumulated in one ſpot, ſo much wealth as has been gathered together in England, by means of her ſkill and induſtry in manufactures; and France is, in my opinion, as well qualified to excell as England. They have not hitherto done ſo it is true,

but

but why have they not done it? Becauſe the King, whoſe will is their law, has not thought it for the grandeur of his family; but he does now think ſo, and we ſhall ſoon ſee France ſtand foremoſt among the manufacturers of Europe.——The French have the activity and verſatility that is wanting; and as far as I am a judge, are by nature better fitted for manufactures than even the Engliſh.

JOSEPH. But I have always underſtood that the great capitals of Engliſh manufacturers, by enabling them to carry on buſineſs on an extenſive ſcale, and by enabling them to give long credit, ſecured them the perference in foreign markets.

BENJAMIN.

BENJAMIN. There is a great deal of truth in that; but ſtill it is to be taken in a limited ſenſe, and we find every day, both among nations and individuals, that inſtead of the permanent advantage being on the ſide of *capital*, it is on the ſide of *induſtry*. The induſtrious not only ſtand their ground againſt capital, but acquire in time, capital themſelves; while thoſe who have capital frequently loſe it. You know, and all the world knows, that the ficklenefs of fortune is proverbial, and every change ſhe makes, muſt be in favour of the poor, and againſt the rich; this is plain to a demonſtration; and the inference is, that the rich have the greater cauſe to fear, and the poor to hope, and that induſtry

duſtry is a more certain ſecurity for the continuance of proſperity, than capital.

JOSEPH. Well, but in England they have both induſtry and capital; and I can have no idea that France can ſoon, if ever, be in a condition to meet them in neutral markets; for I take that to be the queſtion, and not whether France is to ſupply England, or England to ſupply France.

BENJAMIN. Certainly, there are in England at preſent, both induſtry and capital; but in the natural progreſſion of things, there muſt be ſome period, at which that will begin to decline; for the progreſs is this: the induſtry

induſtry comes firſt, capital follows, indolence and luxury are again the conſequence of that and then poverty; ſo that every rich and induſtrious people, ſhould conſider the moment of proſperity, as being but a tranſitory and fugitive period.—Were not this the natural courſe of things, fortune might be arreſted in her courſe, and thoſe who had once gained the ſummit, might bid defiance to thoſe who were below; whereas their danger increaſes, and their care and circumſpection ought to increaſe alſo.——Thoſe that ſtand high, have many blaſts to ſhake them; and if they fall, they daſh themſelves to pieces. Beſides the danger ariſing to nations as they become rich, it is a certain fact, that when once they begin to ſink, it is

this irreſiſtible force. There ſeems to be no power in nature to ſtop the down-hill career; exertion and energy are generally wanting, while the expences and the manners of more prooſperous days remain an eternal bar to induſtry, and frugality, which are the virtues in the higheſt eſteem with infant ſtates.

JOSEPH. It goes very much againſt my ideas, to think that France will ever rival England in manufactures; but however, as you are ſo good ajudge of theſe affairs, and as you ſay the nature of the people is favourable to induſtry, I ſhall not diſpute the matter; and agree ſo far, that, as proſperity is not in its nature, permanent; being proſperous, is rather an argument againſt England, and certainly

certainly gives the advantage to France in a Commercial connection, as England has little to gain, and much to loſe, and France has much to gain and little to loſe.

BENJAMIN. But what is more againſt England, is the nature of her public debts; it is as if a man's appetite for food were continually increaſing, which is well enough, perhaps to a certain length, and may be endured as long as his means of ſubſiſtence increaſes alſo; but if that ſhould ſtop its progreſs, the other will ſoon bring on deſtruction. Upon the whole, I view Britain as a ſplendid meteor, ſhining among all nations, that its courſe has been rapid, and its appearance bright; but the fire that illu-

mins the maſs, conſumes its ſubſtance, and I think it will meaſure its period, and fall to riſe no more leaving the world to wonder at the extraordinary phenomenon.

I have been an enemy to Britain in appearance it is true; and in the caſe of America, certainly hoſtile to it in every view; but I love Britain, and I always ſhall love the place, and reſpect the people. I look forward with concern and with grief to that time, which ſooner or later will ſink her from that proud ſituation, in which ſhe is now placed; and I pray that the infatuation of proſperity may not always hinder her people from viewing that precipice over which they now hang; they are now inebriated with the cup of proſperity,

proſperity, which makes men drunk, while the hand that raiſed it is broken into pieces, like a potter's veſſel. This it is my own opinion, will be the caſe with England; how ſoon I do not pretend to know, but while France follows extenſive and long diſtant views; and while her rival England, is totally immerſed in the project of a day, the balance muſt turn at laſt. Such a line of conduct always has, and always will ſooner or later determine the fate of the nations or the individuals, by whom it is reſpectively purſued.

JOSEPH. You, no doubt, expect to ſee America grow great by that new ſort of vigour, which enlivens a new people, and forſakes older nations.

BENJAMIN. Were I a younger man, I might perhaps, ſee them make a little progreſs, but I am not very ſanguine in my expectations. I am convinced it will be many centuries before they will appear great in the eyes of European nations, and whether they ever will do ſo or not, is a great chance; it has not happened to many ſpots of the earth to be inhabited by men, who could raiſe themſelves above the natural level; and it would be a very raſh and ill founded prediction to ſay, that it would ever happen to America: nor indeed, do I greatly wiſh it ever to happen. The more they are elevated, the ſhorter time their elevation will laſt: in a few years, perhaps in leſs than twenty, I think, that without having a great deal of European

parade

parade and luxury, they will be in the moſt enviable ſtate of any people in the world. They will have every thing neceſſary for life, in the greateſt plenty, even to profuſion, and inſtead of a large family being a burthen, as in Europe, it is a fortune in America. Were we to reaſon abſtractedly on this ſubject we ſhould ſay, that, as to marry and have a family, and to provide for that family, is the end and employment of almoſt every man: ſurely a country muſt be very happy where this is done, without any of thoſe troubles attendant on it in this European world.—I am certain that if there were no ſuch place in this world, but that we knew it were actually the caſe in the moon, we ſhould wiſh to be there; for we ſhould compare our ſituation with

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theirs fairly, but we do not do ſo with regard to America. We take the oſtenſible appearance of wealth for the reality in this compariſon; and becauſe in Europe there is more money and more accumulated riches, we think it is much richer, and ſo it may be, as a country; but that country is the richeſt to an individual, where he can with the greateſt eaſe procure what he wants. To be able to live as they do in America, is much better than to get a guinea for a week's labour in London, and be obliged to part with it for a garret twelve feet ſquare, and ſuch victuals and clothes, as will ſcarcely ſerve till the end of another week. Therefore the reſpective caſes of comparing the rich Engliſh, with their two hundred and fifty millions in the

funds, and the bankrupt Americans, (I ſpeak of the lower claſs) the latter as individuals, are much richer, and much more to be envied. I do not now ſpeak as an American, and wiſhing to make my country appear great; but I ſpeak as an obſerver, who has had an opportunity to know the ſtate of individuals in both countries. Men ſoon forget in proſperity, what formerly was their own caſe, but great in credit, punctual in their payments, and powerful as the Engliſh nation is, it is not above an hundred years ſince they were under the neceſſity of coining braſs money; and it is more owing to the excellent method they have of managing, than to real wealth, that they have hitherto kept up ſuch good credit. In leſs than twenty years after the coinage

of that braſs money, they ſupported the confederate war in Germany, Spain, and Italy, with immenſe ſums; but how did this happen?—Not certainly that they were bankrupts in the firſt period, and rich in the latter; but that under the wiſe and prudent management of King William, credit was eſtabliſhed, and the borrowing and funding ſyſtem was begun. Till then, in times of trouble, rich men *hid* their money, and it diſappeared. Since then, rich men *produce* their money for the public ſervice, and Government mortgages part of the induſtry of the nation for ever, to pay the intereſt. Under the impreſſion of this fact, as well as for reaſons which I have mentioned before, I never will eſtimate the wealth, either of nations or of individuals,

individuals by the credit which they maintain in money matters. Before there were artificial modes of raiſing money, this might be done very properly, and the concluſion would probably be right. formerly no man could get poſſeſſion of wealth, without having given value for it, but now it is quite otherwiſe; for if a man by prudent management can once eſtabliſh his credit, he may get poſſeſſion of money, for which he never has given any value; and this is very much the caſe in England. It is a fact, that though Engliſh merchants are very rich, there are but very few of them who could at any time preſerve their punctuality in payments without artificial means.

JOSEPH. I am very much ſurpriſed at what you now ſay. I agree that your concluſion reſpecting the credit of the Government is very fair; but that Engliſh merchants ſhould ſtand by credit I cannot conceive.

BENJAMIN. I do not mean to infer, that Engliſh merchants are a ſet of bankrupts—far from it; but a man who is worth large ſums may deal beyond the extent of his capital; and there are few merchants in England who do not do ſo; it is thus they are reduced to artificial methods of keeping up their credit.

JOSEPH. At firſt I did not underſtand your meaning properly, but now I ſee the concluſion, that as men of property are reduced to thoſe ſhifts,

and as men of *no* property, or of little, may keep up a good credit by the ſame means, there is no poſſibility of knowing the real circunſtances of a man, uſed to theſe practices, by his punctuality in money maters. I alſo am now convinced, that credit depends more upon prudent management, than upon real wealth; and I think much is yet to be done in Germany by this means.

BENJAMIN. England is an example in this to all the world. To ſpeak by a ſimilitude, credit is to manufactures and commerce what oil is to a machine; and to credit does England owe her greatneſs and her wealth. Did the courſe of nature give me a proſpect of living many years, the chief ſervice I ſhould now endeavour

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to do my country would be, to eſtabliſh a mutual confidence in money matters among the people, and ſo to increaſe credit and capital at the ſame time. As it is, I ſhall endeavour to inſtill thoſe principles into the minds of younger men who may live till the thing is practicable, which, at a period when things are ſo unſettled, would be impoſſible; and as the miſcarriage of one attempt would be very detrimental to future ſucceſs, which will depend upon the opinions of men, it is neceſſary to be very cautious indeed. There is perhaps no human undertaking that requires ſo much caution as this; for the appearance conſtitutes, in fact, the reality. I mean, that unleſs the outſide ſhew is always preſerved with the greateſt care, the whole fabric comes down

down in one inſtant, as if by the operation of magic.

JOSEPH. As England has with ſuch ſucceſs ſet the example to all Europe, I wonder that theſe nations have not more attentively comſidered how they might imitate a conduct, the effects of which are ſo deſirable; for though the nation that goes foremoſt in inventions and in improvements muſt encounter great difficulties, and run great riſks, yet thoſe who follow have an eaſy taſk, if they will be but cautious and attentive, to be guided by the experience of others.

BENJAMIN. It is certainly a ſtrange overſight in other nations, but mankind act very curiouſly in many caſes, and this is one. It muſt be obſerved

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as a truth, from which I believe there are few deviations, that men like better to follow their own ſchemes than to copy thoſe of others; and this is probably the preſent caſe. When indeed one nation ſettles a colony upon a rich ſpot, others are very apt, through avarice or ambition, to emulate or imitate them in that, but not in internal plans, cuſtoms, or regulations.

JOSEPH. I conſider Britain as the phenomenon of the preſent century; and I know not any thing that is lodged in the womb of futurity which I ſhould be ſo curious to know, as how the blazing meteor (for ſuch it is among other nations) will end. I have amuſed myſelf with many conjectures on the ſubject, but I have never pleaſed

pleaſed myſelf with any that I have thought ſufficiently probable to ſatisfy my mind.

BENJAMIN. It is a curious ſubject for conjecture; and I think the deſigns of France give a hint that may ſerve in ſome degree to direct the fancy. Perhaps the territories in India may be taken from Britain, with a great increaſe of national debt; other nations, and in particular France, may be able in time to underſell Britiſh merchants in Foreign markets, and the balance of trade may turn againſt Britain.* There would then an

* Perhaps Dr. Franklin knew that the balance in favour of Britain has been declining for theſe 25 years, and that in the year 1781, for the firſt time, it was actually one million againſt Britain. See Cuſtom-houſe books of England.

an impoſſibility of paying the immenſe taxes, a revolution might enſue, after which, things would begin on a new footing; but, in my opinion, never could they return to their preſent ſtate of proſperity, for other nations would be riſing during their fall, and the greatneſs of every thing is meaſured by compariſon: indeed there is ſome reaſon for thinking, that even if Britain were to meet with no misfortune, the progreſs of other nations would diminiſh her importance. The progreſs of the nations in Europe has been, ever ſince the darkneſs of the Gothic ages began to be diſpelled, ſomething like a race, and Britain and Holland have run moſt ſwiftly; but that race muſt have an end when it will be their fate, like that of the fleeteſt courſer,

to be overtaken at the poſt where they are all upon an equality as to place. Of this, Holland is an inſtance; for the Dutch, by ſuperior induſtry and exertion, got poſſeſſion of the carrying trade of Europe firſt, but now, that other nations have got more forward in commerce, they begin each to carry for themſelves; and in a ſhort time there will be no pre-eminence enjoyed either by the Dutch, or by any other nation, for each will have its ſhare, and no more. It is the beginning of this operation that is now ſinking Holland, and will ſink it farther, becauſe in the country itſelf there is no real foundation for wealth or importance. Although it will be a longer time before manufactures will be equally diſtributed, as they are more difficult to tranſplant and to eſtabliſh in any country

country than the carrying trade, yet in time we ſhall find that they alſo tend to come to a level, or at leaſt they have ſuch a tendency as will diſtribute them much more equally than they have ever have been in any former time.

JOSEPH. I cannot perfectly agree in thinking ſo, for as every age has ſeen ſome country or other diſtinguiſhed above others, for manufactures and arts. I ſhould apprehend, that the thing which always has been, may be expected to continue to be ſtill.

BENJAMIN. we have already had a long converſation on the difference between ancient and modern times. With regard to nations, as cultivating

ing the arts, it might be ſaid that the openings of communication, that let them paſs from one country to another, or rather that conduct them from one country to another, were not then made or laid open. The channels of information are now, however, fully made, and as completely occupied; and indeed mankind ſeem now to be determined, that as far as is poſſible all things ſhall be common to all nations. Two hundred years ago, even in the garden of a King, one could only find ſuch plants and herbs as were natural to the country, or had been brought there by ſome accidental circumſtance. Now the caſe is quite different, for there is ſcarcely a vegetable either uſeful or curious, that is produced from the moſt

Southern

Southern latitudes (where vegetation is almoſt burned up with heat) to the moſt Northerly points, where it is almoſt frozen with cold, in any climate, or in any quarter of the globe, that is not to be found in the gardens of many private men; nor are they brought there by chance, but with a deſire and intention of cultivating as many of the different ſorts as the climate will permit.—Nor is it ſo in botany alone; all the arts practiſed by men, are aimed at by other men alſo, and cultivated with a greater or a leſſer degree of ſucceſs. I do not mean to ſay, that taking any particular art, it will be brought to equal perfection in every country; I do not believe that ever will be the caſe, nor would it be good for mankind that it ſhould be ſo; but

what

what I mean, is, that in time no country will *excell* in many different arts, ſo much as to be able to ſupply others, in ſuch a manner, as to have a very great balance of trade in its own favour.—I believe, on inſpecting the accounts of all thoſe nations that had great balances in their favour, it will at this time be found that they are leſs than they once were, which is a mark of the equality, to which nations gradually tend.—

JOSEPH. I think indeed, there is much plauſibility in that idea, and I perceive that in reality, *that* is the fundamental cauſe of the decline of the Dutch Republic. It frequently happens that the real cauſe of Revolutions and changes is concealed from

from common obſervation. The diviſions and ill blood that has of late prevailed, *ſeems* to be the cauſe of their decline: while I am really inclined to agree with you in opinion, that the changes in the other European nations have brought on that ill blood, which is therefore to be conſidered as the *effect* and not the *cauſe*.

BENJAMIN. Certainly—Do we not every day in common life, ſee ſome man or other riſing up, who by a new invention, or ſome other advantage, which is peculiar and attached to himſelf, ſecures for a while a preference; but time, and the progreſs of other men, always put an end to every thing of the ſort ſooner or later. This is a ſimple and a common caſe, and creates

creates no wonder, becauſe we clearly ſee how it is, but with nations, the ſame nature of a tranſaction is incumbered with ſuch a complication of circumſtances, as hinder the eye from penetrating diſtinctly into the affair, beſides a greater length of time is taken to bring the change about. If it were not for theſe things there is no doubt that men would underſtand the affairs of nations more clearly than they do at preſent: I am therefore ſtrongly confirmed in my opinion, that with regard to arts and commerce, men will get nearer a level. But it is the failing of proſperity not to know the fickle ground on which it ſtands. Every proſperous nation thinks it will always be proſperous, which belief, in no ſmall degree, haſtens and brings on its

fall. In ſhort, there are ſuch a combination of cauſes that operate in bringing down a great and an affluent people; that I am not ſurprized that every nation in its turn, has ſunk under the attack; nor am I even ſurprized to ſee that like the Pendulum they vibrate beyond the point of ſuſpenſion; and that few nations that have fallen from proſperity, have ſtopped till they were deeply immerſed in adverſity.

JOSEPH. Would you then apply all this reaſoning to Britain? Do you expect that it will really ſink in its importance, never more to riſe?

BENJAMIN. I ſhould be very ſorry to think that it would certainly be the caſe,

caſe, but I am very much afraid that it may. Conſider the circumſtances of the caſe; the taxes are already ſo grievous, that the value of money has decreaſed, till the other nations in Europe have got a great advantage in their manufactures, and they will ſtill have more and more. The taxes of Britain are not now leſs than fourteen or fifteen millions of Engliſh money, and two thirds of that goes for intereſt of ſums that are already ſpent. Another war, and another there will ſoon be, muſt increaſe their taxes to near twenty millions, which as I am informed, is nearly about equal to one fifth of the income of all the people in the nation, and is much more then the rent of all the land in the kingdom. This muſt bring on ſome decay of trade,

and if it does, then the taxes become leſs productive; then follows an increaſe of the rate to make up for the failure in the produce: this again hurts trade, and ſo on it will precipitate in an arithmetical progreſſion, the moment that it takes the TURN, till then all may go on every well; nor will I ſay, that even twenty millions will give this turn to the affairs; but as Britain goes on borrowing, ſuppoſe it does not, it only makes it a more diſtant day; for at the rate they go on, if it were thirty millions, they would come at it in time, and that not a very long period.

JOSEPH. Indeed I am afraid all this has too much reaſon in it to be a miſtake, though I muſt confeſs the ideas

ideas are quite new to me; I could wiſh to converſe on theſe ſubjects for a much longer time than I am afraid we ſhall enjoy together. Could I employ a few days, acquiring as much information as I have gained this day, I might return to my Empire, and with ſome reaſon think that I was fit to govern my people.

BENJAMIN. You certainly pay me a great compliment; but this day give me leave to ſay, the information, as well as pleaſure, has been mutual. We have already let the greateſt part of the day paſs over, and it is now more than time that we had ſome refreſhments. I am not accuſtomed to entertain Emperors, nor is this cottage a fit place, I have therefore only ordered ſuch a cold repaſt to be

prepared, as will ſuit the ſcale of this inſignificant place, rather than the gueſt for whom it is intended. In the ſmall arbour in the garden which we left, we ſhall find this, ſuch as it is; and without the inconveniency of ſervants, we may enjoy retirement, and freedom to do and to ſay what we pleaſe.

JOSEPH. You have done, of all things, that which I moſt wiſhed for. I could wiſh no interruption to the pleaſure and inſtruction which this day affords, and this arrangement will juſt complete my deſire: I therefore attend whenever you pleaſe.

His American Excellency, and his illuſtrious gueſt (ſtill attended by the perſon whom the Emperor had brought

brought with him) returned to the garden, where they found a ſmall, but elegant entertainment, ready placed on a round table, that was large enough to hold a variety of the fineſt wines, fruits, and cold diſhes, that Pariſian elegance and luxury could furniſh. When they had ſat down, the Emperor could not again refrain from envying the happy lives of thoſe, who, free from ſtate, and the pomp of courts, enjoy themſelves in their own way. Dr. Franklin ſmiled, and obſerved, that if he could but ſo perſwade the ambitious and the lovers of glory, thoſe men who would willingly lay half Europe in aſhes, and rejoice in its deſtruction, to purchaſe one vain and ſhort lived triumph, he would decreaſe the miſeries of mankind more than all

the Emperors that ever lived ſince the creation of the world had been able to do. But again added the venerable old man, the pleaſure is one of thoſe which ſeems great, merely becauſe it is uncommon, for there are few things that are tolerable, which are not pleaſant ſometimes, and we muſt diſtinguiſh between thoſe pleaſures, after which people eagerly pant, and thoſe which people enjoy in the common way of life, but which may for a time ſeem to be very great. All thoſe men have found themſelves in a labyrinth who have reaſoned about what life was moſt happy, becauſe happineſs depends upon the mind of the man ſuiting the life that he leads. For my part, I ſhall not pretend to throw light, ſaid he, on the intricate ſubject; but from my own

feelings

feelings I ſhould ſay, that the pleaſure of retirement to an active mind, is like the pleaſure of ſleep; exquiſite when it comes in proper time, and proper quantity; but irkſome and intolerable when invited too much. Were you Sir, to ſtay alone here for a month, you would have a longing deſire to enter again into buſy life, that no man in buſy life feels, even in his moſt fatigued moments for retirement.

I believe neither your mind nor mine is fitted for a retired life; and even though I am now an old man, I do not like retirement, except as a relief from its oppoſites, trouble and fatigue. The Emperor acquieſced in this opinion; for he had, if poſſible, a more active diſpoſition than Dr.

Franklin, and would have felt the languor of retirement infinitely more, only he had never tried it, and never will, while he follows his own inclination, which eternally hurries him from one undertaking to another. In ſuch pleaſing converſation, that tends to make men better acquainted with the world, and with themſelves: did they paſs the hour of refreſhment, and perhaps the darkneſs of night might have ſtole in upon their converſation, had not a meſſenger from the Count D——— arrived with ſome diſpatches, which required his Excellency's preſence in Paris that evening.——An excuſe would have been improper; ſo that there was nothing to be done but to cut ſhort a day, which, though nearly the longeſt in the year,

year, ſeemed to both parties to be far too ſhort; for they both declared they never had before enjoyed ſo pleaſing and agreable a day's converſation; and this was probably very true, for in addition to the eſteem (and by this time ſomething more) which was mutually felt, the Emperor had never in his life enjoyed ſo free, unconſtrained, and at the ſame time, ſo entertaining a converſation. On the other hand, even the philoſophic mind of the old ſtateſman, found additional pleaſure from the rank and greatneſs of his gueſt, which did in no ſmall degree increaſe his ſatisfaction.

The meſſenger being diſpatched, the Emperor ſat in a muſing poſture

for a few minutes; he ſeemed a little diſappointed and then began the following converſation.

JOSEPH. This interruption is rather a perverſe ſort of accident; however, I hope, as I have three days yet to ſtay in Paris, we may again paſs ſome time in each others company.

BENJAMIN. And ſhall we then, we who have talked ſo calmly of the revolutions which nature makes in the kingdoms of the world, be diſconcerted by an accident, which we could neither avert nor alter; and which only will be felt for a few hours? Now Sir, give me leave to ſay, that an Emperor ſhould feel for the diſappointments, with which his commands

commands though ever ſo equitable and ever ſo juſt, may be attended; this is a good inſtance, for nothing can be more reaſonable, than that I who have nothing elſe in life to do but to ſerve my country, ſhould obey her call; yet it is not at this time at all agreable.

JOSEPH. I own my dear friend, that the reproof is perfectly juſt, and I ſhall be blameable if I do not in future remember how it is to *receive* and obey orders as well as to *give* them.—I never fairly felt myſelf in the place of a ſubject before, and this leſſon will be of ſome benefit I hope to all my ſubjects. But, to return to the viſit to me while I am in Paris, which will yet be three days; to-morrow I go to Verſailles, to ſee the

new

new improvements on my ſiſter's gardens diſplayed, and for two days I ſhall be taken up with all the gewgaws and the follies of this luxurious court; the next day I ſhall devote with infinitely more pleaſure to my friend, if he will favour me ſo far as to return my viſit at my hotel.

BENJAMIN. After the communications of this day, I am not certain that it would be well to take ſuch a ſtep, as for myſelf I have nothing to fear, I have acted ſo, that nothing can be ſaid or done to me; but my country has received favours from this court, and has many yet to aſk, and I hope many to receive. Proof is neceſſary to puniſhment, but the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion or diſpleaſure may cauſe the denial

denial of a favour. I certainly ſhould be exceedingly ſorry not to have the pleaſure of another interview, but I think it might be better if it were at my reſidence in town, in which caſe, if any thing tranſpires, no harm can ariſe, as I am bound by politeneſs to receive the honour of the viſit as the Emperor of Germany, is not anſwerable to the King of France.

JOSEPH. That is well, let it be ſo, but before I came here this day, I intended to requeſt the honour of your viſiting Vienna before you leave Europe, and I here promiſe, that if I can be of any uſe to your friends in the weſtern world I ſhall readily exert myſelf.

BENJAMIN.

BENJAMIN. I wiſhed to return by way of Holland, where I actually have ſome buſineſs, but on dropping a ſlight hint of my intention it was received in a ſtile which prevented me from repeating it. I know the jealouſy of this court, and muſt yield to the neceſſity of the times and the humours of men in power; I am pretty well accuſtomed to that now, and can bear it with great patience; but if there is any thing that I ſhould prefer to another, merely for the enjoyment which it would afford, it would be the very journey to Vienna, which you have done me the honour to propoſe, but which, however, with a great and juſt ſenſe of the favour intended, I muſt decline. I have too much at ſtake for my country

country to be my own maſter in this caſe.

JOSEPH. That is very unlucky, but you know I have great intereſt with France, by means of my ſiſter; perhaps I might be able, even without appearing in it, to remove every difficulty.

BENJAMIN. I am not ignorant of the greatneſs of your power, I know that it would remove to appearance at leaſt, every difficulty, but as I before obſerved, the leaſt diſpleaſure, even though it ſhould not be viſible, would hurt the cauſe of my country, and the diſpleaſure would be moſt likely to be great, when the application came through a channel that would inſure ſucceſs. I ſhall endea-

vour

vour to find out privately, whether I might not be permited to viſit Vienna, without giving any offence, but I beg and intreat that no means may be uſed to obtain conſent; for that is but concealing miſchief.

JOSEPH. What is the particular reaſon that the court of France is ſo much averſe to your viſiting any other European kingdom?

BENJAMIN. I believe it is becauſe they are afraid of any connection ariſing between the Americans and the other nations of Europe. Though the firſt views of France extended no farther than to ſeparate Britain and America from each other, yet like the true votaries of ambition, the views have ſince been extended to ſome-

ſomething farther, to ſomething that will never be realized. France and America are like oil and water, they will never coaleſce; when grievances on both ſides are forgotten, Britain and America will be good friends, but never France and America; they are jealous of the French and diſlike them, beſides a ſtorm is perhaps at no very great diſtance, the French will be diſappointed and may then claim returns for the favours they have done America, as Louis the XIV. reminded the Dutch; but the Americans neither can nor will make the return they wiſh, (to grant them an excluſive trade) nor do the French deſerve it, for there never was one grain of generoſity or of friendſhip, in any thing they have done for us. Envy towards Britain, and their own

intereſt

intereſt have been their only motives, and in the firſt of theſe they are rewarded ſufficiently already, though their is no end to ambition.

JOSEPH. I underſtand the matter now perfectly, and ſhould be glad to know whether there is much reaſon for ſaying, that the French court is not to be truſted; that its promiſes are not well kept.

BENJAMIN. I believe there is very good reaſon for ſaying ſo, for as intereſt is their ſole motive of action, both in making promiſes and in keeping them whenever views change, before the promiſe is performed, then is it forfeited.—As individuals, I know no men I would ſooner put truſt in than the French, but as politicians

politicians I truſt to nothing they ſay, for I know it juſt depends upon what may appear to be their intereſt at the time.

JOSEPH. That is abominable: how can men of honour in their own affairs be ſo void of all ſhadow of it in matters of ſtate?

BENJAMIN. Why I think it may be explained. Every man in France, whether high or low, is bred up in a belief, that whatever can be done for the ſervice of the Grand Monarque is right to be done, and I do not think any other conſideration would lead ſome men of honour whom I know to forfeit their word as I have ſeen them do. This appears to me to be the caſe, whether or not I am right

I do

I do not pretend to ſay, but it muſt be ſome very ſtrong motive indeed, that can make a man of honour forfeit his word, or neglect to perform his promiſe.

JOSEPH. I imagine you are perfectly right, and am ſorry that the moſt refined nation in the world ſhould be ſo far barbarouſly ignorant, as to think that any human inſtitution can alter the eternal laws of right and wrong; that is one of the things I diſlike moſt in the Roman Catholic religion, that it makes truth and juſtice ſubſervient to the will and intereſt of men, as if there were any power in nature that could alter or ſuſpend theſe eternal immutable laws for one moment.

BENJAMIN.

BENJAMIN. It gives us but a bad idea of the human underſtanding, to find, that the prejudices of education can ſo far ſuperſede reaſon as to admit of ſuch extravagant and wild fancies; I ſcarcely ever yet knew any man who upon ſome particular ſubject was not widely wrong, not indeed through ignorance, though every man muſt be ignorant on many ſubjects, but from prejudice, this is to me a proof, that though there certainly is ſuch a thing as reaſon founded on immutable truth, yet that error eaſily aſumes its appearance when the paſſions or prejudices of men interfere.—But this is a ſubject, on which, if we were fully to enter, we ſhould not only conſume the ſmall remainder of this day, but a whole day, or perhaps many days.

JOSEPH. Part of what I wiſhed to aſk, I find muſt be put off till another time. I have a great many queſtions, to which I ſhall trouble you to give anſwers when we meet again; they relate in a particular manner to the Engliſh Court, and ſome of the characters who figure there.

BENJAMIN. I am not ſure if I could give you much information on that head, for as I have not been in England ſince the war begun, and the moſt part of thoſe who make a figure now, were but little known till then. I am not well acquainted with their characters, but what I do know, I ſhall with much pleaſure communicate.

The

The Emperor then obſerved that it was time to depart, and roſe from table with apparent regret. Several very handſome compliments paſſed on both ſides, which did not ariſe from any formality, or wiſh to pay compliments, but merely were as if extorted in an involuntary manner, by the eſteem which they had for each other.

They agreed to meet early on the third day, as was before propoſed, and to correſpond by letters, from which the Emperor inſiſted that all ceremony ſhould be baniſhed, and even titles laid aſide, "We are "two minds," ſaid he "making "communications, and what have "we to do with the imaginary

" titles and honours which man-
" kind have eſtabliſhed? as men,
" we are only equals; and in our
" converſation and our letters, let us
" affect nothing more."—The Emperor with his attendant, returned to Paris, and Dr. Franklin was not long in following, being already rather too late.

Whether the converſation was renewed on the third day (which muſt have been a Tueſday) does not appear, but it is probable that by ſome accident it never did take place, for in the letter which Dr. Franklin wrote from America there is no mention of that, or of any other thing that paſſed between them, except at this converſation, to ſeveral parts of

of which he refers: beſides, he ſays, "ſoon after I was honoured with "your viſit at my cottage near "Paris, &c." inſtead of which he would more probably have ſaid, "ſoon after our laſt meeting at "Paris."

But ſtill, this is only conjecture, nor is there any degree of probability that it ever will be known; for the accident to which the world is indebted for this converſation, and the following letter, is ſo ſtrange, that another like to it, is not within the bounds of probability, and ſcarcely even within the province of chance.

We ought in this caſe, to follow the advice which his Excellency, with

ſo much propriety gave his Imperial gueſt, and not let ourſelves be diſappointed or diſtreſſed by a thing which it is beyond our power either to avert or alter.———

HIS

HIS EXCELLENCY

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,

TO THE

EMPEROR JOSEPH.

Boſton, May 27, 1786.

WHILE it pleaſes providence to allow Benjamin Franklin to enjoy life and thoſe powers, without which it is not to be deſired, it will be one of his greateſt pleaſures to fulfill his promiſe to his illuſtrious friend, by informing him of every material

occurrence that can happen to an old man.

Soon after I was honoured by your viſit at my Cottage in France, I bid adieu to that ambitious and reſtleſs nation, and indeed I may ſay to Europe; for at my age, another viſit to your continent is neither to be wiſhed for, nor expected. While I was at ſea, unincumbered with buſineſs, and ſhut up from ſociety, (for I literally was ſo) I entertained myſelf with writing ſome trifling obſervations on Ventilation, as by that I might divert myſelf, perhaps increaſe the conveniency of mankind, and take my leave for ever of natural Philoſophy; at the ſame time I conjectured,

and

and ſorry I am to ſay, too truly, that when I ſet foot on this Weſtern world I ſhould not find time to indulge my own inclination in my ſtudies; and I am now convinced that I have done for ever, with every thing but the political affairs of my country.

On my arrival, I found the derangement of finances, the confuſion of affairs, and the poverty that might be expected after a long and deſperate civil war; but alas, I did not find that unanimity, that friendſhip, and that regard for the public weal, that might have alſo been expected, among men who had fought in the ſame field, and who had bled in the ſame cauſe; in the cauſe of freedom, of

juſtice, and of their country.—In place of that I found ſubſtituted ſuch a combination of feuds, of jealouſies, and of different opinions on every ſubject, that it ſeemed as if the Demon of diſcord had preſided over all the people on this Continent.

It was, as in thoſe times, when there was no King in Iſrael, and every man did what ſeemed good in his own eyes. When I left America to go to France, a wonderful unanimity prevailed; they were as a well diſciplined army before a battle. All their faces were as in one direction, and their minds turned to one object: but alas, on my return, they were like an untrained, undiſciplined multitude, looking a thouſand ways, and aiming

ing at a thouſand different objects, incommoding, diſtreſſing, and injuring each other.—

O, how imperfect is human nature! and how widely miſtaken are thoſe reaſoning Philoſophers, who imagine that the human mind was framed to be completely happy, or that it can exiſt without being kept in order by ſuffering or by fear. Here are three millions of examples to prove, that liberty, that a fine ſoil and affluence, but heap curſes upon ill regulated minds. Were the fields barren, to fatigue the body with their cultivation, or were there Kings to hold them in ſubjection, they might perhaps, be tolerably happy, but as it is, they are intolerably miſerable.

Unleſs ſome ſteady form of Government is eſtabliſhed here, it will be long before America will be a flouriſhing country, and it is even not impoſſible but that if internal diſſentions continue long, it may fall a prey to European powers, who may divide it among themſelves.—Of this I am the more afraid, that I perceive, if theſe diſſenſions continue long, they will both pervert and fatigue the minds of people ſo much, that they will ſubmit to any ſort of oppreſſion.

I am almoſt tempted to wiſh that ſome of the moſt active leaders in the Revolution had been made King, only, that the merits of different leaders, which might have intitled them to nearly equal claims, and might have

have occaſioned further diſturbances. Merit alone, I am afraid admits of too great a variety of opinions, to be a claim for general ſubmiſſion; and mankind have very wiſely allowed a more decided ſort of claim, that of Hereditary right, which however abſurd, ſome people may think it, is certainly much better of the two. To make men unite in one opinion, is the buſineſs, and that is the way to do it. It is as neceſſary to gain order and regularity in a State, that all power ſhould iſſue from one point, as in deſcribing a circle, that the circumference ſhould be drawn by means of a centre. I wiſh America were fairly under ſome regular Government, and after viewing all different forms, I ſhould prefer that of England, with ſome alterations.

As I before ſaid, my countrymen are of very different opinions on every ſubject, and moſt of all on that of government, ſo that it would be in vain at preſent to propoſe any particular form; were I inclined to do it, I ſhould propoſe Britain for the model. I would invite over a Proteſtant Prince from Europe, and one of *the ſons of the king of England*, would be my choice; for, after the recollection of recent grievances is covered by time, England and America will be good friends; the ſame people, the ſame language, religion and manners, who are ſo naturally connected as they? Theſe are ſolid reaſons for a friendſhip, and I am convinced will one day rivet it very cloſe. This idea of *the ſon of the King of England* being King of America, may appear a little

a little ſtrange from me, who have oppoſed the government of the father ſo ſtrongly, but it only ſhews that I oppoſed it from principle, and not from enmity; for the ſake of my country, and not of myſelf. It would be waſting time to enter at length into any ſerious reaſons for this, but there are many, and in my opinion weighty. There is not any man in America who would do for a king, for men never ſubmit except by force, to be governed by one of their fellow ſubjects. There is one thing, however, that I muſt mention leſt this idea ſhould ever get out into the world, it would be indiſpenſably neceſſary, to make a law regarding the ſucceſſion, *that the crowns of England and America never could be held by the ſame perſon*, but that failing of heirs

heirs to the King of America by marriage, the Crown ſhould go to his next natural heir, provided ſuch heir was neither King of Britain, nor heir apparent to the Crown.—I dare ſay it will appear, that I have changed my ideas a little about Kings and Crowns: I freely own it was always a maxim of mine to improve by experience, and old as I now am, I ſtill continue to do ſo. The condition in which I have found my country, is very new to me, and has altered my opinion: Not with reſpect to the throwing off the Britiſh yoke, for that I approve of as much as ever; but with reſpect to the beſt mode of Government, my opinion is conſiderably altered. Theſe opinions however, are ten years at leaſt, too early for America; but in time they will

will come to my way of thinking. Of the endleſs diſturbances here, it would be uſeleſs to give any detail. Indeed I am ſo ſick of them, and ſo much vexed and diſappointed, that I cannot even think on the ſubject with any degree of patience; but if any ſymptom ſhould appear, from which I might augur better days, it ſhall be proclaimed to all the world by ſound of trumpet.

Every thing that relates to the politics of nations, or the good of mankind, will I know, be an acceptable communication. Perhaps you know already, more of what I am going to ſpeak, than I do myſelf; but ſtill I cannot help noticing it.—The application of arithmetic to political affairs, has been of great uſe to man-

mankind, ſince it has been practiſed; though that has not been for any great length of time. Two or three months ago, I received from a friend in London, a ſpecimen of a new invention, in which the trade and finances of England were delineated in charts upon paper, like a map of a country. The longitude conſiſting, as it were, of equal portions of time, and the latitude of equal ſums of money, in ſuch a manner, that a man's yearly income for a number of years, or the revenues or trade of a nation aſſume a fixed ſhape, and give a very ſimple and accurate idea of the progreſs and amount of the tranſaction.

It is not ſo much on account of the ingenuity of the invention, as for its great

great utility that I mention this; and I am free to declare, that I do not know any diſcovery of late that I think will be of more utility than this ſort of arithmetic, becauſe it impreſſes a diſtinct idea of thoſe national affairs on the mind. A thing which hitherto never was done, nor indeed could be done by figures. I dare ſay, though ſome time is neceſſary for every change, that before it is long, moſt nations will have duplicates of their accounts made out in this manner. I have begun to practiſe the mode here, and it throws light upon the ſtate of our accounts, as if by inſpiration, one minute giving a much clearer idea of the matter, than whole days and weeks do without this ſimple invention. Certainly, I think it muſt be well known on the Continent

tinent, for the good ſenſe of mankind ſeldom lets paſs unnoticed at this day, any uſeful improvement; but ſhould it not have got into Germany, I cannot let ſlip this opportunity of mentioning a thing that may be of ſo much uſe to the affairs of the Empire, and indeed of the world.

I obſerve by ſome Engliſh and French newſpapers, that your threats againſt Maſonry, have been enforced.—I am rather ſorry for it; but on that ſubject I have nothing to ſay farther, than what was ſaid at my cottage in France.

With reſpect to Britiſh affairs, as far as I can underſtand them, they are poſting on the very road that France wiſhes; all that I can ſay, is, that

that I am heartily ſorry that it is ſo; but nothing but extreme neceſſity ever alters the meaſures of the Engliſh Miniſters.

I dare ſay that the internal regulations, which I am informed are making in France, will ſoon raiſe her to great wealth and importance, and I hope the other nations on the Continent, particularly the dominions of my illuſtrious friend, will not be left behind.

Encouraging confidence among people of buſineſs towards each other, deſtroying the old laws of incorporated towns, and giving as much freedom to practiſe any trade, in any place as poſſible, are the ways to increaſe trade and manufactures.

One

One law in particular that has been long in force and much eſteemed in the German dominions, ſhould be altered or repealed, the one that I mean, obliges artiſts to travel three years, for improvement in their buſineſs before they can ſettle in any town; now this is very wrong, for it accuſtoms men to put too great a value on the nicety and excellence of their work, while expedition would be much more uſeful, as men cannot always afford to buy the niceſt articles. In England where the mechanical arts flouriſh moſt, people get leave to work as they pleaſe, provided they ſatisfy their employers. This laſt is far the better way, becauſe theſe men think of making money and nothing elſe, which is the true object; it is that alone

alone that is the criterion by which you can judge of a man's real value to his country as an artiſt; I do not mean to ſpeak of thoſe men of genius, who invent and improve things, they are to be found in every country, the greater part of buſineſs is done not by men of genius, but of labour and induſtry, and therefore, they ſhould be encouraged in preference to ſkill, in theſe days when there are many men of ingenuity without taking any means to encourage them, farther than what the deſire of money holds out. If there is any miſtake in this reaſoning, it is addreſſed to one who can ſee the error, but it is not ſo much founded on theory as on experience, when I was in England.

I ſend

I ſend this letter by a private gentleman to Vienna, directed under cover to Monſ. B—— and I ſhould with vaſt pleaſure add twice as much, but I am obliged to go into the interior country to-morrow, to endeavour to accomodate ſome differences that have ariſen about the diviſion of lands. In this manner are we conſtantly teazed here: there is no trouble in exerting one's ſelf in a good cauſe, and when the object fills the mind, but in ſmall affairs, I am *all body* and extremely lazy. When the great affairs of the nation occupied me, I was *all mind*, and though often fatigued, I knew no more of the feeling I have now, than I do of the pleaſures of the Elyſian Fields. So great is the phyſical difference, that

the

the energy of the mind makes on the conſtitution of the body.

I hope for the honour of a letter, which, indeed, I have been already expecting, and I ever am with the moſt perfect reſpect, and with a full ſenſe of the honour of this correſpondence from which, however, as agreed, I have excluded all ceremony,

your's moſt faithfully,

BENJ. FRANKLIN.

FINIS.

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